



Foundations of LEED

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CONTENTS

I. Introduction.....	1
II. What is LEED	1
Overview	1
LEED Mission	1
USGBC Strategic Goals.....	2
LEED Strategic Goals.....	2
History and Background	2
III. How LEED is Developed	3
Overview	3
Consensus.....	3
Continuous Improvement.....	3
Global Approach to LEED	5
LEED Structure.....	6
Balloting	7
Appeals to the LEED Rating System	8
LEED Supporting Tools.....	8
IV. LEED Committees	9
Overview	9
USGBC Policies and Procedures for Committees	9
Committee Structure.....	9
LEED Steering Committee Charter	10
Global Technical Development Framework for LEED	12
V. Modifications to this Document	13
VI. Appendix 1: Pilot Credits and Beta Versions	13
VII. Appendix 2: Revisions to LEED and Balloting	14
Development Process.....	14
Consensus Committee	16
Publication for Public Comment.....	16
Consensus Committee Voting.....	17
Meetings with USGBC.....	18
VIII. Appendix 3: Changes	18
Addenda.....	18
Updates.....	18
IX. Appendix 4: Appeals	19
Lodging an Appeal.....	19
Form of Appeal.....	19
Waiver.....	20
Interim Dispute Resolution Process	20
Appeals Panel and Hearing	20

I. INTRODUCTION

USGBC’s vision is that “buildings and communities will regenerate and sustain the health and vitality of all life within a generation.” USGBC’s mission, “to transform the way buildings and communities are designed, built and operated, enabling an environmentally and socially responsible, healthy, and prosperous environment that improves the quality of life” builds on this vision through the development and improvement of the LEED rating system.

This document, the Foundations of LEED, defines the purpose, development, and implementation process and procedures for the LEED green building rating system. The Foundations of LEED is an evolving design for market-transformation to be achieved through the implementation and ongoing development of LEED and the processes, procedures, and infrastructure that support it. As with LEED, this document is a work in-progress, updated on an as-needed basis as LEED evolves to ensure that LEED remains the benchmark for leadership in market transformation of the built environment.

The Foundations of LEED is required reading for all persons involved in the LEED development and quality improvement process.

The environmental footprint of the constructed human environment is massive. LEED was created to provide the people who design, build, and operate buildings with an organized, consensus benchmark for defining and evaluating green buildings. LEED is intended to transform the way people practice design, construction, and operations of buildings. Its requirements are written by the people who design, construct, operate, and occupy those buildings, neighborhoods, cities and communities. As professional practice, technology, products, and services evolve, so will LEED.

II. WHAT IS LEED?

1. Overview

Developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), the LEED® green building rating system™ is a framework for identifying, implementing, and measuring green buildings, neighborhood, cities and communities design, construction, operations, and maintenance.

LEED is a voluntary, consensus-based framework which serves as a guideline and assessment mechanism for the design, construction, and operation of high-performance, green buildings, neighborhoods, cities and communities.

LEED seeks to optimize the use of natural resources, promote regenerative and restorative strategies, maximize the positive and minimize the negative environmental and human health impacts of the buildings industry, and provide high quality indoor environments for occupants. LEED emphasizes integrated design, appropriate integration of existing technology, and use of state-of-the-art strategies to advance expertise in green building and transform professional practice.

The LEED green building rating systems are voluntary, consensus-based, and market-driven. The technical basis on which LEED is built seeks a balance between requirement of existing best practice and voluntary incorporation of leadership strategies. LEED sets a challenging yet achievable set of benchmarks that define green building.

2. LEED Mission

LEED encourages and accelerates global adoption of sustainable and green building and neighborhood development practices through the creation and implementation of a universally understood and accepted benchmark encompassing existing and new standards, tools, and performance criteria.

3. USGBC Strategic Goals

- Sustainable Cities and Communities: Catalyze and lead the building sector’s active participation in the movement to achieve sustainable cities and communities.
- Climate and Natural Resources: Lead the dramatic reduction and eventual elimination of building construction and operations’ contribution to climate change and natural resource depletion.

- Green Building Marketplace: Accelerate green building demand, delivery, and accessibility.
- Public Policy: Advocate for effective and comprehensive green building policy and codes at all levels of government.
- International: Advance green building around the world by developing certification capacity, sharing knowledge, and collaboratively advancing regionally appropriate and effective green building practices and policies.
- Organizational Excellence: Leverage USGBC's organizational structure and capacity to support and catalyze the market transformation required to achieve its mission.

4. LEED Strategic Goals

With LEED, USGBC strives to:

- Promote the tangible and intangible benefits of green buildings, including environmental, economic, human health, and social benefits over the life cycle of buildings.
- Achieve high profile and successful product launches.
- Earn widespread and routine endorsement by private and public real estate industry leaders and stakeholders.
- Earn widespread and routine endorsement by Federal, State, and Local Government and adoption as a vehicle for policy development and implementation.
- Deliver superior customer service that is professional, timely, and targeted to the customer's needs.
- Offer a comprehensive portfolio of programs to meet the diverse needs of the real estate industry.
- Develop innovative technical tools and support services for LEED products.
- Consolidate LEED as the standard for green building practices for our homes, nonresidential buildings, and developments throughout the U.S.
- Support international adaptations of LEED with interested international organizations, such as green building councils.
- Lead the industry state of knowledge about practical implementation of the most up-to-date and practical innovations.
- Improve LEED performance criteria as the industry gains experience with integrated design, green construction, and sustainable operations and maintenance.

5. History & Background

Following the formation of USGBC in 1993, the organization's members quickly realized that the sustainable building industry needed a system to define and measure "green buildings." USGBC began to research existing green building metrics and rating systems. Less than a year after formation, the members acted on the initial findings by establishing a committee to focus solely on this topic. The composition of the committee was diverse; it included architects, real estate agents, a building owner, a lawyer, an environmentalist, and industry representatives. This cross section of people and professions added a richness and depth to both the process and to the ultimate product.

The first LEED pilot project program, also referred to as LEED version 1.0, was launched at the USGBC Membership Summit in August 1998. After extensive modifications, LEED version 2.0 was released in March 2000, with LEED version 2.1 following in 2002 and LEED version 2.2 following in 2005. This first series of rating systems was developed to largely address the needs of owner-occupied new construction commercial buildings.

As LEED has evolved and matured, the program has undertaken new initiatives. In addition to a rating system specifically devoted to building operational and maintenance issues, LEED addresses the different project development and delivery processes that exist in the building design and construction market, through rating systems for specific building typologies, sectors, and project scopes: Core & Shell, New Construction, Schools, Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance, Neighborhood Development, Cities & Communities, Retail, Healthcare, Homes, and Commercial Interiors.

Project teams interact with Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI) for project registration and certification. GBCI was established in 2008 as a separately incorporated entity with the support of the U.S. Green Building Council. GBCI administers credentialing and certification programs related to green building practice. These programs support the application of proven strategies for increasing and measuring the performance of buildings and communities, as defined by industry systems such as LEED.

The green building field is growing and changing daily. New technologies and products are being introduced to the marketplace, and innovative designs and practices are proving their effectiveness. In order to drive this change, the LEED rating systems and reference guides will also evolve. Project teams must comply with the version of the rating system that is current at the time of their registration.

III. HOW LEED IS DEVELOPED

1. Overview

Since its launch in 2000, USGBC has evolved LEED to address new markets and building types, advances in practice and technology, and greater understanding of the environmental and human health impacts of the built environment. These ongoing improvements to LEED are developed by USGBC member-based volunteer committees, subcommittees, and working groups, in conjunction with USGBC staff. They are then subject to review and affirmation by the LEED Steering Committee (LSC) and the USGBC Board of Directors prior to a vote by the relevant consensus committee and ratification by USGBC's membership. The development process is based on principles of transparency, openness, and inclusiveness.

2. Consensus

LEED is developed by USGBC member-based volunteer committees, subcommittees, and working groups in conjunction with staff. LEED development follows a structure that includes a balanced representation of stakeholders and management of conflict of interest, to ensure that the development of LEED is transparent and consensus-based. The LEED committee structure balances market needs and constraints with consistency and technical rigor in the development and improvement of the credits within LEED, to ensure the quality and integrity of the LEED brand. The balloting process of new versions reinforces the open consensus process. The appeal procedures that are implemented by USGBC further support the consensus process and ensure the fair treatment of affected stakeholders. All of these measures are essential to protecting and enhancing the integrity, authority, and value of LEED.

3. Continuous Improvement

LEED is updated through continuous improvement, which involves a regular development cycle for revisions to the rating systems, including the option for beta testing of the new rating systems by projects, and a Pilot Credit Library where proposed credits are tested and evaluated before they can be considered for incorporation into the LEED consensus process for approval by USGBC membership. Substantive revisions to LEED may go through pilot or beta testing but must undergo public comment and consensus committee approval to be formally adopted as the latest version (and consequent sunset of the prior version). Substantive revisions are considered anything other than simple errors and corrections to LEED.

There are three basic types of LEED development:

1. Implementation and Maintenance of Current Version includes the improvement of LEED through the correction and clarification of credit language. It also includes fixing more substantive inaccuracies and omissions which require a more rigorous review and approval process.
2. Adaptations to the existing version include the ability for both specific space types and international projects to be addressed through the creation of credit adaptations. This allows new paths to be introduced in existing credits to meet the needs of projects that would otherwise be unable to utilize the requirements in LEED.
3. Next Version is the comprehensive improvement phase of LEED development through a periodic evaluation and revision process. This phase includes multiple avenues for stakeholder input and final approval. The ideas generated during the development of next version LEED credits are often tested by LEED project teams prior to ballot (either through pilot credits or an entire beta rating system). The test process is described in more detail below.

Each distinct type of LEED development is described below.

i. Implementation & Maintenance of Current Version

Implementation and Maintenance of the current version of LEED includes two primary types of activity:

- LEED Addenda

USGBC may issue periodic addenda to the LEED content. Addenda to LEED include both substantive and non-substantive changes to language. These are meant to clarify, correct, interpret and provide alternative language to aid in the implementation of LEED.

- LEED Updates

USGBC may issue periodic updates to LEED content. Updates include substantive changes to the rating system as part of the regular evolution of LEED and shall be done in accordance with the LEED balloting procedures.

The processes for developing addenda and updates are outlined in Appendix 3 of this document.

ii. LEED Adaptations

The process for adaptations of the existing rating systems and their credits is designed to provide an efficient and streamlined approach for responding to the particular needs, constraints, and opportunities of different project types. By limiting the scope of adaptations, USGBC can respond to far more project types, thereby enhancing the market transformation potential of LEED.

Limiting the scope of the adaptation is important for two reasons: First, it ensures that the workload for staff, volunteers, and consultants will be manageable. Second, it keeps the revisions within the bounds of changes that can be implemented between ballots of version changes and identifies changes that must go through the consensus process. Scope will be defined in three ways:

- Number of credits that can be changed
- Types of changes that can be made
- Time that can be spent on the adaptation

Market Sector/Project Type Adaptations

Working groups will be created to address market sector/project types identified as priorities. These working groups will include appointed members who will represent various perspectives and membership categories and who have relevant expertise. They will be supported by USGBC staff and consultants.

iii. Next Version Development

The LEED rating system will be updated on a regular development cycle which restarts when the previous version is approved by the relevant consensus committee and ratified by vote of the USGBC membership.

Next Version Development allows the public to provide ideas for rating system improvement from the beginning of the next development process. At all stages of the development process, feedback from USGBC membership is requested to help shape the improvements of LEED and allow for openness and transparency. The LEED committee structure maximizes the opportunities for member participation through member-comprised subcommittees and working groups that focus on addressing specific issues within the rating system.

Once approved for public comment, the Next Version rating system will follow the Balloting Procedures outlined in Appendix 2.

iv. Pilot Credits/Beta Versions

Pilot credits

The LEED Pilot Credit Library is a rating system development tool established to encourage testing of new and revised LEED credit and prerequisite language, alternative compliance paths, and new and innovative green building technologies and concepts. An effective infrastructure for the Pilot Library facilitates refinement of LEED credits and enhances the effectiveness of LEED.

Pilot testing of new ideas in LEED encourages continuous improvement of the LEED rating system by establishing incentive for continued innovation of green building practices. The Pilot Credit Library allows USGBC to test and refine elements such as proposed prerequisites and credits as well as alternative compliance paths to existing credits before they are introduced into the core rating systems.

All pilot credits and prerequisites shall follow the procedures in Appendix 1.

Beta Version

In order to test the changes to the LEED rating system either by credit or for an entire rating system, projects may use a new rating system prior to public comment and balloting through a beta test of the system, described more fully in Appendix 1.

4. Global Approach to LEED

USGBC has developed a global approach to LEED that will leverage the knowledge, technical abilities and enthusiasm of partner organizations around the world in the establishment of LEED internationally. This approach recognizes LEED as a global rating system for green building that meets the needs of different countries while maintaining stringency and consistency in a single tool.

USGBC's vision for LEED internationally is based on three core principles:

- Global Consistency – Maintaining consistency of the technical stringency and certification process of LEED across the world;
- Regional Approach to Prerequisites and Credits – Providing opportunity for countries to collaborate on the establishment of regional alternative compliance paths to LEED requirements that meet the unique needs of a particular region. This collaboration will begin with reference standards and be expanded to address other appropriate prerequisite and credit components over time.
- Local Support and Outreach – Building partnerships to provide resources, education, training and support for LEED at a local scale, while acknowledging the possibility of local adaptations in the future.

5. LEED Structure

LEED is voluntary, consensus-based, and market-driven. Based on existing and proven technology, it evaluates environmental performance from a whole building perspective over the life cycle of a project, providing a definitive standard for what constitutes a green building in design, construction, and operation.

The LEED rating system is designed for rating new and existing commercial, and residential buildings as well as neighborhood development, and cities and communities. It is based on accepted energy and environmental principles and strikes a balance between known, established practices and emerging concepts.

i. Minimum Program Requirements

Minimum Program Requirements (MPRs) are minimum characteristics that a project must possess in order to be eligible for LEED Certification. These requirements define the types of buildings that the LEED green building rating system was designed to evaluate, and taken together serve three goals:

1. To give clear guidance to customers
2. To protect the integrity of the LEED program
3. To reduce complications that occur during the LEED certification process.

LEED certification may be revoked from any project upon gaining knowledge of non-compliance with any applicable Minimum Program Requirement. The purpose of these requirements is to ensure an understanding of the fundamentals of green building

ii. Rating System Structure

The LEED Steering Committee shall adopt categories to be used in the relevant LEED rating system.

Each LEED rating system shall be based on a point scale as determined by the LEED Steering Committee, which may allow for bonus points. LEED project certification shall be based on achievement of the following percentage of points:

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| • 40-49% | Certified |
| • 50-59 % | Silver |
| • 60-79 % | Gold |
| • 80% + | Platinum |

iii. Credit Structure

LEED rating system development considerations:

- Prerequisites: Required elements, all of which must be met before a project can be considered for LEED certification.
- Core Credits: Specific actions a project may take in the categories described above. All Core Credits are voluntary, but each level of LEED certification requires that certain thresholds of credits used must be met.
- Innovation Credits: Bonus credits given for exemplary performance beyond Core Credit performance levels or implementation of innovative actions that confer significant environmental benefits not covered in the rating system.
- Regional Priority Credits: Bonus credits that acknowledge the importance of local conditions in determining best environmental design, construction, and operations practices.

Effort is made to present credits and prerequisites in LEED in a common format. This structure is considered part of the LEED brand and should be retained in all LEED versions:

- Intent
- Requirements

This also helps those familiar with previous versions of LEED to learn the new rating system and helps to maintain consistency in the assessment processes.

As knowledge of sustainable design, construction, operations, and maintenance practices increases and improved methods are developed to structure credits, LEED will evolve and these changes will be implemented within the rating system. This

development will introduce some temporary incompatibility between new and existing credits, however because USGBC expects to update the system on a regular cycle, consistency will be restored throughout the rating system.

All credits and prerequisites must use the structure and format described above. All credits and prerequisites shall achieve comparable stringency to maintain LEED as a tool for market transformation.

LEED prerequisites and credits must be written to be:

- Clear
- Concise
- Objective
- Doable
- Documentable
- Verifiable

New credits shall be performance-based rather than prescriptive wherever possible, but also practicable for the market being addressed.

iv. Weightings

In LEED, the allocation of points is split between direct human benefit and direct environmental benefit. These benefits are based on the potential effect of each credit with respect to a set of impact categories. Examples of these categories include global warming, greenhouse gas emissions, fossil fuel use, toxins and carcinogens, air and water pollutants, and indoor quality. The types of impacts are quantified and the resulting allocation of points among credits is called credit weighting.

Credits that most directly address the prioritized impacts are given the greatest weight. Credit weights also reflect a decision by LEED to recognize the market implications of point allocation. The credit weightings process will be reevaluated for each new version to incorporate changes in values ascribed to different building and neighborhood impacts and types, based on both market reality and evolving scientific knowledge related to development.

v. Regionalization

To provide incentive to address geographically specific environmental issues, LEED includes bonus points for the achievement of credits identified as addressing an issue of regional importance in the project's location. Regionalization is re-evaluated during every LEED development cycle to determine the best method for addressing geographically-specific issues, both within the United States and internationally.

6. Balloting

Revisions to credits and prerequisites in the LEED rating system that require ballot shall follow the Balloting Procedures in Appendix 2.

7. Appeals to the LEED Rating System

Appeals to the balloted rating system content shall follow the Appeals Procedures in Appendix 4.

8. LEED Supporting Tools

USGBC develops and maintains tools to support the LEED rating system, including reference guides, LEED Online, and workshops and educational courses. These tools are meant to educate and provide the necessary information for project teams to have a robust understanding of LEED. These supporting tools are regularly updated to reflect the improvements made to LEED through the development cycle.

i. Reference Guides and Supplements

The LEED Reference Guides are manuals intended to help guide a LEED project from registration to certification in the design, construction, operations and maintenance of new or substantially renovated commercial or residential buildings and neighborhood development. The reference guides are a tool for LEED projects, incorporating guidance for the

implementation of rating systems. The reference guides include detailed information on the process for achieving LEED certification, detailed credit and prerequisite information, resources, and standards for the LEED rating systems. For each credit or prerequisite, the guide provides: intent, requirements, point values, environmental and economic issues, related credits, summary of reference standards, credit implementation discussion, timeline and team recommendations, calculation methods and formulas, documentation guidance, examples, operations and maintenance considerations, regional variations, resources, and definitions.

Supplements are smaller guides designed to address market sector/project type adaptations and include the information necessary to successfully submit for LEED certification. These are meant to provide additional information not covered in the related reference guides and are not meant as stand-alone tools.

ii. Online Portal

LEED certification is offered through an online portal and is the primary vehicle for managing the LEED documentation process. Through the online portal, project teams can manage project details, complete documentation requirements for LEED credits and prerequisites, upload supporting files, submit applications for review, receive reviewer feedback, and ultimately earn LEED certification. The online portal provides a common space where members of a project team can work together to document compliance with the LEED rating system.

IV. LEED COMMITTEES

1. Overview

As a member-driven organization, USGBC committees are the primary means by which the organization develops consensus-based programs to serve the green building industry. USGBC's members are an essential part of LEED rating system development, which relies on volunteers to provide the technical and market expertise necessary to create a robust leadership tool for green design, construction, operations and maintenance of buildings and communities. The LEED committee structure is developed to maximize the opportunities for USGBC member involvement and utilize their relevant expertise.

In addition to recommending policies to the USGBC Board, LEED committees and subcommittees have primary responsibility for the development, implementation, and revisions of LEED.

2. USGBC Policies and Procedures for Committees

LEED committees and subcommittees must adhere to the policies and procedures set forth by the Board of Directors in the [USGBC Policies and Procedures for Committees and Workgroups](#) document. This document outlines requirements for committees and subcommittees, such as formation approval, balance, transparency, and conflict of interest, and can be found on usgbc.org.

3. Committee Structure

The LEED Steering Committee (LSC) is a standing committee of USGBC established by the USGBC Board of Directors. In addition, there shall be the following groups involved in the creation, maintenance, and updating of LEED:

- *Consensus Committees:* The USGBC Board of Directors shall establish a consensus committee for markets representing particular product types and shall appoint the members of each such consensus committee. Each consensus committee shall support the creation and updating of a particular LEED rating system and shall outline specific credits, prerequisites, or issues within that LEED rating system to ensure continuous improvement.

After a rating system has been released by the committee, affirmed by LSC for framework alignment, and approved by the USGBC Board of Directors to go to public comment, the consensus committee will undertake approval of the rating system.

Each consensus committee may constitute and direct LEED working groups to ensure proper execution of their responsibilities.

Consensus committees shall record and regularly post minutes of their meetings and provide periodic strategic communications regarding LEED, provided, however, that all public statements are approved by, and released through, USGBC's communication team.

The Chair of LSC or their designee (so long as such designee is a member of LSC) shall be invited to all meetings of each consensus committee; neither the LSC Chair nor their designee shall have the right to vote.

- *Technical Advisory Groups ("TAGs"):* TAGs are committees which advise LSC and the consensus committees on particular technical aspects of LEED, e.g. materials or indoor air quality.

Working Groups: Working groups are groups that come together for the completion of a specific task with a clearly defined scope to be accomplished in a set period of time. Working groups are established by the LSC or a consensus committee.

- *Advisory Task Forces:* Staff may designate advisory task forces to meet for a short duration to informally advise staff on issues limited in scope during the development process.

4. LEED Steering Committee Charter

Constitution

The Board of Directors establishes the LEED Steering Committee (LSC) as a standing committee of USGBC, consistent with Article IX of the USGBC Bylaws. The work of the committee is governed by this Charter, as approved by the USGBC Board.

Purpose

The LSC is an integrated group of volunteers and staff charged with developing and maintaining the LEED rating system as a leadership tool, preserving the integrity of the framework of LEED, and ensuring the use of the consensus process to evolve all LEED rating systems in accordance with the mission, guiding principles, and strategic plan of USGBC.

Four principles guide LEED Steering Committee activities:

1. LSC will conduct itself in a way that ensures transparent, participatory, and effective governance.
2. LSC will ensure that LEED remains technically rigorous, market relevant, and leadership oriented.
3. LSC will ensure consistency among all LEED rating systems.
4. LSC will ensure collaboration among LEED committees, advisory groups, and staff.

Roles and Responsibilities

LSC works to establish the strategic direction and oversight for LEED, ensures that LEED project performance meets the goals of LEED, and perpetuates LEED's evolution based on project experience, building market maturity, and technological advancements. Specifically, LSC:

1. Sets the strategic priorities and framework for LEED rating system development globally.
2. Approves a framework for LEED development that ensures technical rigor while considering market leadership and feasibility.
3. Establishes and charges working groups to assist in developing LEED and support LEED implementation and maintenance
4. Addresses the technical, market, and implementation issues of the LEED framework encompassing all LEED rating systems for the global markets.
5. Adjudicates LEED committee and working group issues during LEED development.
6. Reviews committee- and working group-recommended improvements to LEED to affirm alignment with the framework for LEED.

Additionally, LSC will have the following roles:

1. Governance: To maintain consistency, consensus, openness, and transparency, LSC shall:
 - Record, approve, and distribute official committee meeting minutes.
 - Communicate with the USGBC Board, LEED committees, and working groups regarding activities and decisions and determinations made by LSC.
 - Coordinate with LEED committees to ensure proper execution of their responsibilities in conformance with the *Foundations of LEED* and the USGBC Policies and Procedures for Committees and Working Groups.
 - Constitute and direct LEED working groups to ensure proper execution of their responsibilities in conformance with the *Foundations of LEED* and the USGBC Policies and Procedures for Committees and Working Groups.
2. International: LSC will collaborate with each consensus committee and USGBC staff to ensure the technical rigor of LEED is maintained as it is applied in other countries.
3. Education: LSC will liaise with appropriate committees and working groups to ensure information about LEED development, implementation, and market expansion is readily available.
4. Emerging Issues: LSC will work collaboratively with internal and external stakeholders to address priority issues not described above to facilitate the advancement of LEED in the buildings industry; LSC and staff will collaborate to identify lead responsibility for new issues.

Membership

LSC is made up of volunteers as voting members and USGBC staff non-voting members, outlined below.

Volunteer – Voting Members

- Chair
- Immediate Past Chair
- Incoming Chair
- Chair of each Technical Advisory Group
- Vice Chair of each Technical Advisory Group (without vote)*
- Chair of each consensus committee
- Vice Chair of each consensus committee (without vote)*
- Up to 6 Appointed Members At-large

Staff – Non-voting Members**

- Up to 4 senior staff from USGBC
- A designated representative from GBCI

In the event that a Chair of a Technical Committee is unable to attend a meeting of the LSC, the Vice-Chair of such a Technical Committee may cast a vote in that meeting. Vice-Chairs are encouraged to attend LSC meetings whether or not the Chair of the relevant committee is present.

**In conformance with [USGBC Policies and Procedures for Committees and Working Groups](#), the USGBC CEO appoints staff as members of the LSC.

Officers

A volunteer Chair heads the LSC. A volunteer Incoming Chair and volunteer Immediate Past Chair support the Chair. These three positions are officers.

Terms and Term Limits

Volunteer Members. The terms for LSC volunteer members from Committees are determined by their terms as Chairs or Vice Chairs of the Committees they represent. The terms for at-large LSC members are: an initial one-year term, followed by a two-year term, and then a one-year term. LSC recommends these appointments and the USGBC Board appoints these members based on identified needs for specific expertise and/or experience.

Officers. The LSC officers follow an automatic succession process such that the Incoming Chair succeeds the position of Chair upon the expiration of term, resignation, or discharge of the Chair. The Chair succeeds the position of Immediate Past Chair upon the expiration of his or her term as Chair. Each officer term is one year. The USGBC Board of Directors appoints the Incoming Chair.

Term limits for volunteer members of LSC are four consecutive years, or up to six consecutive years for officers, in conformance with the [USGBC Policies and Procedures for Committees and Working Groups](#).

Committees and Working Groups

LSC is empowered to create subcommittees consisting of members of the LSC and working groups in conformance with [USGBC Policies and Procedures for Committees and Working Groups](#).

Filling Vacant Seats

Vacancies arising in the LSC Committee representative seats are filled by the Vice-Chair on the relevant Committee. Where automatic succession cannot occur due to discharge or resignation, etc., the USGBC Board may fill such vacancies. In conformance with the [USGBC Policies and Procedures for Committees and Working Groups](#), vacancies arising in at-large volunteer seats are filled by the USGBC Board and vacancies arising in staff LSC seats are filled by the USGBC Board at the recommendation of the USGBC CEO.

Meetings

LSC will meet as needed by conference call and through in-person meetings. [USGBC Policies and Procedures for Committees and Working Groups](#) cover policies for voting, declaration of conflicts, meeting attendance, and other committee procedures. USGBC staff will provide LSC with administrative support.

Communications

In addition to the regular posting of minutes, LSC will provide periodic strategic communications regarding LEED. All public statements from LSC shall be approved by, and released through, USGBC's communication team.

Public Openness and Transparency

Notices regarding committee work of general interest will be posted to the USGBC website and be accessible to USGBC members and non-members. This shall include:

- LSC meeting minutes
- Notices of proposals to establish or change LEED rating system criteria
- Notices about updates to the LEED rating system posted for public comment and/or ballot
- Notice of committee vacancies, formation of new committees and working groups, and public events

5. Global Technical Development Framework for LEED

Principles

- LEED, through its designation of credits, credit categories, system goals, and weightings process, provides a common global framework for green building. While these components might be regularly updated, they will remain globally-consistent and will not vary by region.
- USGBC staff maintain a global lens in all technical development work, regularly seeking and responding to insight from international practitioners.
 - USGBC staff and LEED committees will consider international usability and relevance during development and review of technical proposals and other work.
 - USGBC maintains its commitment to assemble diverse and inclusive LEED committees that welcome and reflect the global constituencies they serve.
- LEED encourages and rewards global leadership, as well as leadership relative to the local context when applicable. Multiple strategies are used to localize LEED, including:
 - Identification and inclusion of alternative compliance paths within existing credits or prerequisites;
 - Pilot credits to test a locally-relevant topic not yet addressed in LEED; and
 - Regional Priority credits to award additional points for credits that are locally important within countries or climate zones.
- LSC gathers feedback, provides insight on local variation and needs, prioritizes and develops regional or local solutions, and collaborates for global or cross-regional solutions.
 - Priority for technical solutions is given to those that demonstrate:
 - > High technical stringency and market leadership;
 - > High market transformation potential at the broadest reasonable scale; and

- > High relevance for localized social, economic and environmental issues related to the built environment.
- LSC is responsible for considering the most appropriate scope for technical solutions, which could be geographic, economic, linguistic, or based on other shared conditions.

V. MODIFICATIONS TO THIS DOCUMENT

All modifications, revisions, or updates to this document must be approved by the USGBC Board of Directors. LSC may recommend modifications, revisions, and/or updates to this document. Appendices may be approved as separate documents and must follow the approval process outlined in each appendix.

VI. APPENDIX 1: PILOT CREDITS AND BETA VERSIONS

A. Pilot Credits

The LEED Pilot Credit Library is a rating system development tool established to encourage testing of proposed and revised LEED prerequisite and credit language, alternative compliance paths, and new and innovative green building technologies and concepts. An effective infrastructure for the Pilot Credit Library facilitates refinement of LEED credits and allows for the continuous improvement of LEED. The Pilot Credit Library facilitates the introduction of proposed prerequisites and credits to LEED. This process allows USGBC to test proposed prerequisites and credits and to receive market feedback and general comments on them. The relevant consensus committee, with recommendations from LSC, will determine which proposed prerequisites and credits, including versions of future LEED credits, must be pilot tested, and shall approve final language before proposed credits or prerequisites are placed in the Pilot Credit Library.

The LEED TAGs consult with staff, the LSC, and the consensus committees on the Pilot Credit Library and collectively and collaboratively they facilitate the evolution of proposed credits and prerequisites during the pilot test period. Consensus committees and TAGs may consult with specific subject matter experts to ensure that the requisite technical expertise is brought to bear in the evolution of credits in the Pilot Credit Library.

Pilot testing of credits can, and often will, be concurrent with public comment and ballot process of the core LEED rating system. The Pilot Credit Library is a complement to the formal public comment and ballot process used by USGBC to develop LEED and to serve as a form of public comment.

The process for Pilot Credit proposals from LEED committees and TAGs to progress through the LEED Pilot Credit Library will consist of the following steps:

1. A proposed prerequisite, credit, substantive revision, or alternative compliance path to an existing credit is suggested for inclusion in the Pilot Credit Library and submitted to USGBC staff.
2. USGBC staff brings proposals to LSC. The LSC, in conjunction with staff and the relevant consensus committees, will initiate a review process for proposed prerequisites and credits that warrant further consideration for inclusion in the Pilot Credit Library and LSC shall forward to the relevant consensus committee.
3. If a proposed prerequisite or credit is approved by the relevant consensus committee for inclusion in the Pilot Credit Library, the consensus committee will determine the applicable testing parameters for each credit.
4. For proposed prerequisites, credits, and alternative compliance paths approved for inclusion into the Pilot Credit Library, the consensus committee will:
 - a. Prepare an evaluation plan that establishes the specific feedback process and evaluation criteria, consulting with other LEED committees as necessary.
 - b. Track the progress of the proposed prerequisite or credit as it is piloted. Collect and analyze project team feedback to evaluate Pilot Credit effectiveness and market feasibility.
 - c. Propose revisions to the proposed prerequisite or credit as needed during the pilot process to reflect lessons learned and to enable testing of the “final” version of the proposed prerequisite or credit and the changes will be reviewed by the committees and TAGs as appropriate.

- d. When a pilot credit is at least one year old, staff will prepare a report summarizing the results of the pilot, including information on the number and types of pilot participants, achievement of evaluation criteria, changes to the proposed language during the pilot and rationale, and other information that will guide the consensus committee in its decision on final approval.
5. For year-old pilot credits, the relevant consensus committee(s) will recommend to LSC one of the following outcomes and request that LSC weigh in on such recommendation: (i) closing the pilot credit and removing it from future consideration; (ii) keeping it in the pilot credit library; (iii) moving it to the innovation catalog for consideration in future versions of the rating systems (if the pilot credit is approved for inclusion in the innovation catalog and/or a draft update to the rating systems and no public comment and ballot process is underway, the pilot credit will remain in the innovation catalog until the next public comment and ballot cycle begins); or (iv) incorporating it into the current rating systems as a new compliance path.

After LSC provides its feedback to the proposed outcome, the relevant consensus committee will have final approval on pilot credit decisions affecting its rating system. Pilot testing of credits can, and often will, be concurrent with the public comment and ballot process of the LEED rating systems.

Beta Versions

In order to test the changes to the LEED rating system for an entire rating system, projects may use a beta version offered by the relevant consensus committee. In a process as set forth for the approval of pilot credits, the relevant consensus committee approves the system for beta use by projects. Project teams follow the same process for submittal and review for certification as for any other active version of the rating system. Certification is awarded to projects if achieved. The beta version of a rating system may remain open for use either for certification to the full rating system or for credit substitution during the development of the next version of the rating system. No beta rating system can be required to be used until it has completed ballot.

VII. APPENDIX2:REVISIONSTOLEEDANDBALLOTING

LEED is developed in a manner that ensures openness, transparency and consensus. Any substantive changes to LEED including the addition, deletion, or substantive revision of prerequisites, credits or credit point values, must be developed and balloted pursuant to the procedures below. Addenda shall follow the process as set forth in Appendix 3, Changes.

A. Development Process

1. Proposals for a change to LEED may be submitted by any person at any time. Staff shall maintain a record of all such proposals received and offer them to the LSC and relevant consensus committee for review at the discretion of LSC and/or the consensus committee.
2. From time to time, the relevant consensus committee or the LSC may identify specific individual credits, prerequisites, or the entirety of LEED rating system, for public input and review. USGBC shall announce the credits/prerequisites/rating system to be reviewed and shall give opportunity for thirty days following such announcement (“Proposal Period”) for the public to propose changes (“proposals”) to such identified credits/prerequisites/rating systems. Proposals previously submitted but not reviewed relating to the credits/prerequisites/rating system to be reviewed shall be considered submitted in the Proposal Period so long as they meet the Threshold Requirements. Threshold Requirements for all proposals to change LEED credits or prerequisites are as follows:
 - a. Proposals shall be expressed in terms of actual edits to existing LEED language using tools provided by USGBC. Although USGBC welcomes receiving suggestions for changes to the entirety of the system, only proposed edits to existing LEED language shall be required to be considered; wholesale changes may be considered in the complete discretion of USGBC staff and the relevant consensus committee. Multiple proposals for change from the same person/organization for each LEED credit shall be permitted.
 - b. Proposals for change must be specific.
 - c. The rationale and technical justification for each proposal for change must be provided and must be technical in nature.

At the end of the Proposal Period, all proposals for change received shall be reviewed and considered by the relevant consensus committee, with the following exception: USGBC staff will notify submitters of proposals for change that do not

meet the threshold requirements above and provide an opportunity for them to resubmit. If the submitters do not resubmit their proposals for change in compliance with the threshold requirements, staff will eliminate each such proposal for change.

3. Once the Proposal Period is closed and the proposals are collected, the relevant consensus committee shall distribute the proposals, to the extent it believes useful, to the relevant TAG(s) for consideration and recommendations, with a copy to LSC. The consensus committee shall provide a timeframe in which the TAG(s) must respond with a recommendation. All proposals for change that met the Threshold Requirements shall be considered.
4. After a TAG finishes its consideration, it shall forward recommendations concerning all proposals received by it for review to the relevant consensus committee, with a copy to LSC. Proposals shall be aggregated by credit and, for the purpose of establishing recommendations, the TAG shall consolidate and address similar proposals together. The recommendations shall be specific and shall accept, reject or accept as modified the credit(s) at issue. Accompanying each recommendation shall be a rationale, including the relevant technical reasons, for the recommendation.
5. The relevant consensus committee shall review any recommendations it receives from the TAG(s). The consensus committee may engage the LSC for review of any of the proposals for change and related recommendations.
6. After its review, the consensus committee shall forward the recommendations to the LSC and LSC shall review the recommendations to ensure alignment of the recommendations with the LSC-approved framework. To the extent that the recommendations appear out of alignment with the LSC-approved framework, LSC and the consensus committee shall work together promptly to modify the recommendations so that the recommendations meet the framework.
7. Once LSC is satisfied that the recommendations align with the LSC-approved framework, the consensus committee, together with the LSC, shall then present its recommendation and rationale, including the relevant technical reasons, for the recommendation, for each proposal considered useful to the USGBC Board of Directors for approval. Either portions of a rating system or an entirely new version of a rating system may be presented to the Board.
8. Once the Board approves of the recommendations and rationale, it shall cause the recommendations and rationale, including the relevant technical reasons, to be published for comment, and, upon completion of the remaining steps (including the approval of the Consensus Body), direct opening of the subsequent member ratification. The document set out for public comment shall include responses to the proposals submitted without identifying the name or organization of the proposer; the responses shall aggregate similar proposals by credit.

B. Consensus Committees

1. Consensus committees shall be structured to represent the different technical and market issues involved in the development, implementation, and maintenance of a particular LEED rating system. USGBC shall, from time to time, open a call for persons to serve on each relevant consensus committee related to the LEED rating system under review. Prior to publication of proposed recommended changes to LEED, the Board shall use its best efforts, to the extent practicable, both to achieve balance in each such committee's membership and to ensure that the groups, as identified below, are represented in the committee's membership. Best efforts shall be used to assure that a committee's members from any one such group do not control more than 25% of the voting membership of the committee. The groups shall be as follows (which may be redefined from time to time):
 - Property/building owners (including government), developers, brokers
 - Architectural/engineering firms, specifiers, urban planners, and designers, sustainability consultants
 - Contractors, constructors, project managers, service suppliers, facility operators
 - Product manufacturers and raw material suppliers
 - Building occupants/users, sustainable community advocates, unions
 - Regulation enforcement agencies, standards developers
 - Utilities, energy service companies, insurers, academia, finance, others
2. Each member of a consensus committee shall be identified as being within an interest group. No single interest group shall make up a majority of the committee. If necessary, the USGBC Board shall appoint additional persons to the committee so as to meet appropriate balance.

C. Publication for Public Comment

1. Upon publication of its recommendations (“Publication”), USGBC shall invite public comment in the form of written testimony from any interested party for a period of 45 days following Publication (the “Public Comment Period”). The consensus committee’s recommendations will be published for public review and comment on the USGBC website. USGBC members will be notified of the comment period and an announcement will be made to the public. Any employee of a USGBC member, as well as any member of the public who has or creates a free a site-user account on the USGBC website may review and comment on the draft.
2. Web-based comments will be accepted within the 45 day public comment period only through an online form displayed on the USGBC website. The comment form will require respondents to reference specific paragraphs or sections of the draft and will include provisions for submitting substantive and procedural comments. Project team feedback gathered during the course of testing of credits and prerequisites in the Pilot Credit Library is considered, by its nature, to be equal to a comment submitted via the online USGBC website form. Comments that are outside of the scope of the recommendations will not be considered. Only comments submitted through either the public comment forum or the Pilot Credit Library process will be accepted. No response will be given to comments submitted by hard copy letters, faxes, or email.
3. Comments will be collated and reviewed by the relevant consensus committee. Consideration will be given to each comment and evaluation will be made as to whether to make revisions to the credits/prerequisites based on the comments.
4. The comments received, without commenter name or organization will be posted on the USGBC website. The relevant consensus committee shall direct a response to each proposed recommended changed section of LEED upon which comments have been received and shall include a rationale for whether the recommended comment/objection has been accepted or rejected.
5. After consideration of all comments received from interested parties during the Public Comment Period, the relevant consensus committee may, in its discretion, invite persons or organizations whom it believes it would benefit to participate in meetings specifically scheduled for the purpose of permitting the committee’s greater understanding of the submitted written testimony.
6. The relevant consensus committee, in its discretion, may direct TAGs to evaluate and advise it on input provided during the Public Comment Period.
7. If the consensus committee makes any substantive revisions to the report and recommendations released for the initial public comment period, it shall publish a revised report and recommendations on the USGBC website for additional public comment. Only in the event of material change to the LSC-approved framework would any LSC review be sought. The revised report and recommendations will be made available for web-based comment for 30 days through the online form on the USGBC website.
9. Any additional comments will be collated and reviewed. Consideration will be given to comments and evaluation will be done as to whether to make revisions to the credits based on the comments.
10. On the basis of substantive and/or procedural comments, the consensus committee may remand any part or the whole of the proposed action for an additional comment period repeating the relevant steps as it deems necessary for the committee to take action. If a third public comment period is believed by the committee to be necessary, it will be open for 10 days; if needed, a fourth public comment period will be open for 5 days.
11. The relevant consensus committee will review the final recommendations with respect to each proposal and submit the same to the USGBC Board and to the LSC. The Board shall ask the LSC to perform an independent reasonableness review of each proposal which may be performed with the assistance of third parties engaged by the LSC. Once the Board is presented with the reasonableness review conclusions, and is satisfied that a vote may proceed, it shall so notify the consensus committee and the LSC.

D. Consensus Body Voting

1. Each member of the consensus committee shall vote one of the following positions:
 - a. Affirmative
 - b. Affirmative, with comment
 - c. Negative, with comment
 - d. Abstain
2. All negative votes submitted without comment or with comment not related to the ballot shall count toward quorum but shall not be factored into the numerical requirements for consensus. The consensus members shall discuss the comments offered amongst themselves in order to seek consensus.
3. Consensus is achieved when:
 - a. A majority (more than 50%) of the members of the committee casts a vote, including abstentions; and
 - b. A minimum of two-thirds of votes cast are affirmative votes; and
 - c. At least three of seven interest groups are represented on the committee and the members of at least two interest groups cast affirmative votes.
4. All negative votes shall be recorded as unresolved negatives. Once the consensus committee has achieved consensus, the final language shall be published for ratification by the USGBC membership as a whole. Failure to meet quorum by voting members of USGBC within thirty days of offering the language to the USGBC members for ratification shall deem the final language to have been ratified, so long as a majority of votes cast by voting members are in favor of such ratification.

E. Meetings with USGBC

Any member may request, either in groups or singly, a meeting with USGBC’s VP of Governance, or other USGBC staff as designated by the CEO, to discuss and address concerns at any point during the above- described process. Similarly, in the discretion of USGBC, USGBC may invite members or other persons, either in groups or singly, to meet with staff to discuss and address concerns at any point during the above-described process. If, after such meetings the member’s concerns remain unresolved, opting-in members may appeal only as set forth in Appendix IV, Appeals.

Note: the USGBC Board of Directors may withdraw language presented for public comment or vote at any time during the above-described process.

VIII. APPENDIX 3: CHANGES

USGBC may issue periodic addenda and/or updates to LEED content (i.e., credits, prerequisites or credit point values) in accordance with the processes outlined below. These processes consider the type of issue and the appropriate individual or party to address the proposed change. Updates requiring balloting will follow a separate process.

Addenda

Addenda are changes to LEED that include both substantive and non-substantive changes. A request for addenda may come from USGBC staff, the Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI), LSC, a LEED committee, working group, or advisory group and may be applied to the current version of LEED on a regular basis without following LEED balloting procedures. LEED projects are required to use current addenda available at time of registration.

Substantive Changes to LEED content include corrections, interpretations and alternative compliance paths that may substantively change the way a given requirement is achieved or meant to be achieved. All proposed substantive changes must be brought to the appropriate LEED committee for review and recommendation. The relevant committee shall make the final determination concerning proposed Substantive Changes. Substantive Changes will go into effect immediately, but will be subject to comment and ballot in the next available LEED ballot. Substantive Changes are defined as follows:

1. *Corrections* fix unintentional inaccuracies, errors and/or omissions in content.
2. *LEED Interpretations* define or expand upon existing content to provide clarity where a misunderstanding of language has occurred.

3. *Alternative Compliance Paths (ACPs)* provide additional options to content that address unique project needs and advancements in science and technology.

Non-substantive changes to LEED include grammatical and typographical changes in content that further refine or correct unclear wording and do not substantively change the way a given requirement is meant to be interpreted. Non-substantive changes may include spelling, grammar and punctuation changes as well as language rearrangement and/or reformatting. Non-substantive changes do not need input from LEED committees.

Updates

Updates to LEED include substantive changes to content that are part of the regular evolution of LEED. Updates cannot be integrated into LEED content unless approved through the LEED balloting procedures. To be considered an update to LEED, a change must meet any of the following criteria:

- Creation of new credits or prerequisites
- Revisions to the point value of a single credit or credit category
- Modifications to existing credit or prerequisite language as part of deliberate, next version improvements that change stringency or technical rigor

Updates to LEED may be placed in the LEED Pilot Credit Library for testing and refinement prior to ballot.

IX. APPENDIX 4: APPEALS

A. Lodging An Appeal

An appeal may be lodged on procedural and/or substantive grounds. Any USGBC member in good standing that opted-in to the consensus balloting step may lodge an appeal on procedural and/or substantive grounds. USGBC members agree, as a condition of membership, to follow the procedures set out in this or subsequent updates to *Foundations of LEED*; and all members opting in to a ballot will be asked to confirm that they have read and are familiar with *Foundations of LEED* before submitting their ballot. An appeal on only procedural grounds is permitted to be lodged by any party with a direct and material interest and who has been or will be adversely affected by actions or inactions by USGBC procedures with regard to the development, approval, revision, reaffirmation, or withdrawal of the LEED green building rating system under ballot.

Time for lodging an Appeal: Appeals must be presented within thirty (30) calendar days after announcement of the results of the vote of the consensus body. The filing of an appeal shall not delay the implementation of an affirmatively balloted measure unless otherwise determined by USGBC in its sole discretion.

Process for Lodging an Appeal: A notice of appeal must be submitted in writing to USGBC's Vice President of Governance. Each appeal shall be accompanied by a filing fee of \$1000 or otherwise in accordance with a fee schedule published by USGBC. This fee may be waived or reduced upon sufficient evidence of hardship. Parties wishing to request a fee waiver shall provide such request and supporting materials to the USGBC Board along with their notice of intent to appeal. Such fee shall be returned in the event that the USGBC Board returns a resolution or final determination favorable to the appellant.

B. Form of Appeal

Procedural appeals must describe, in writing and with specificity, and attaching supporting documentation as appropriate:

- The date or occasion of any alleged process irregularity;
- Written objections raised or comments made contemporaneously or reasonably following the process irregularity;
- The adverse impact on USGBC members or the general public; and
- How the adverse impact of the process irregularity is material or substantial.

Substantive appeals must describe, in writing and with specificity, and attaching supporting documentation as appropriate:

- The alleged lack of substantive, technical, factual, or other basis for the substantive element;
- Written objections raised or comments made contemporaneously or reasonably during the development process relating to the subject matter of the appeal;
- The adverse impact on USGBC members or the general public; and
- How the adverse impact is material or substantial.

C. Waiver

The Notice of Appeal must demonstrate that written objections or comments reasonably articulating the procedural or substantive concerns that inform the basis for the appeal were made as soon as reasonably apparent during the development process and prior to balloting, and in the case of procedural concerns, that such objections are made within 10 (ten) calendar days of such action or inaction taking place.

Emailed objections or comments to USGBC staff and USGBC meeting minutes are among the forms of written documentation deemed adequate to satisfy this requirement. Objections and comments need not be comprehensive or exhaustive; however, failure to make any objection or comment during the development process and prior to balloting will be deemed a waiver of the right to appeal. Promptly, and no later than 30 calendar days after receipt of the written request for appeal, USGBC shall respond in writing to the appellant, acknowledging the appeal.

D. Interim Dispute Resolution Process

USGBC's acknowledgement of receipt of appeal begins a 60-day mandatory dispute resolution process. The appellant and USGBC representatives approved by the USGBC President and CEO will, in good faith, meet to discuss the basis for the appeal and options for resolution. If a resolution is agreed upon, the agreement will be memorialized, filing fee returned, and the appeal process concluded. If either party concludes that resolution is not possible, the appeal shall continue after the end of the 60-day dispute resolution period, or such earlier time as the parties may agree.

E. Appeals Panel and Hearing

The parties will have a maximum period of 20 calendar days to agree on a panel of individuals to hear the appeal. It is recommended that each party select a representative and those two representatives agree upon a third, although any approach upon which the parties agree is acceptable. If the parties cannot reach agreement on the composition of the Appeals Panel within 10 calendar days, the USGBC Board of Directors will appoint three individuals with appropriate qualifications related to the appeal and with no vested interest in the outcome of the appeal to the Appeals Panel. Further, no individual may serve on the Appeals Panel who (i) is a current employee or board member of either USGBC or the appellant, or (ii) who participated with respect to the procedural or substantive issue that is the basis for the appeal. At least one individual who is not an employee of a USGBC member or an employee of the appellant will be appointed to the panel. The three parties appointed to hear the appeal shall certify that they have no direct or perceived interest in the outcome of the appeal.

After the Appeals Panel is agreed upon or selected, the parties will have five days to request a hearing or allow the Appeals Panel to proceed without a hearing. The Appeals Panel will issue a hearing management protocol to govern timelines and procedures to hear and conclude the appeal in accordance with generally accepted due procedures. The appellant has the burden of proof.

The Appeals Panel must complete the hearing or review of the appeal on the basis of the written filings, and issue its decision, as soon as practicable, and in no event, in more than 180 days from the selection or appointment of the Appeals Panel unless mutually extended by the parties. The Appeals Panel may be convened in person or by teleconference at the discretion of the Appeals Panel. There is no right to appear before such Panel, though the Panel may allow appearance by the appellant or other persons at the invitation of and in the sole discretion of the Appeals Panel. If the Appeals Panel finds merit in the appeal, it may recommend that all or some portion of the process be repeated, or provide for further procedures to correct the nonconforming procedural action or inaction. The Appeals Panel decision may be appealed to the USGBC Board of Directors, which may consider the appeal in its discretion. If the Board of Directors declines to hear the appeal, the decision of the

Appeals Panel is final. If the Board of Directors hears the appeal, its decision is final.

The Appeals Panel has authority to impose any remedy supported by and necessitated by the evidence presented, except that it shall impose the most narrowly tailored remedy sufficient to resolve the appeal. By way of example, appeals related to a single credit or policy, for example, may impose a remedy specific to that single credit or policy, but may not extend beyond the single credit or policy and may require a re- balloting of such credit or policy.