

# Best Practices for LEED® Certification in VA Facility Construction & Renovation Projects (v. 2)

This *Best Practices* document has been developed to assist CFM staff in facilitating LEED® certification in major facility projects. It will be regularly updated to capture any new best practices. Staff are encouraged to provide feedback and suggestions to [SustainableDesign@va.gov](mailto:SustainableDesign@va.gov). This document is based on categories and credits for LEED v4.

## **Planning/Programming for LEED® Silver Certification**

- Planners are encouraged to have a LEED Green Associate® or LEED Accredited Professional® credential.
- Conduct a LEED® certification feasibility analysis.
  - Evaluate all LEED® categories and point levels to determine which are feasible/not feasible.
  - This analysis will determine which Planning-level actions must be taken to ensure certification success.
  - Pursue higher levels of LEED® (i.e. Gold or Platinum), if the project is a suitable candidate.
  - If LEED® Silver certification will not be attainable, notify AED OFP immediately and submit a formal waiver request.
- If site location is not yet determined, consult with a LEED AP-credentialed individual to help identify potential sites that will maximize credit achievement. Prefer sites that (in order of priority):
  - Result in reuse of a historic building.
    - or -
  - Result in the reuse of any existing building.
    - or -
  - Fall within a “LEED for Neighborhood Development”-certified area (see USGBC website for locations).
    - or -
  - Consist primarily of previously developed land.
    - or -
  - If previously developed land is not available, prefer a location that avoids:
    - Prime farmland.
    - Legally-designated floodplains.
    - Habitats of protected species.
    - Disturbing land within 50-ft of wetlands or 100-ft of bodies of water.
- Prefer sites that have access to multiple forms of transportation and high mixed-use density nearby.
- Conduct a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (in accordance with ASTM E1527-05) as early as possible.

- Conduct feasibility analysis of Renewable Energy (at a minimum, include Solar Photovoltaic, Solar Hot Water, Direct Geothermal Heating, Wind, and/or on-site Hydroelectric).
- Conduct feasibility analysis of Ground-Source Heat Pump (Geothermal Exchange).
- For all renewable energy technologies determined feasible, conduct a high-level lifecycle cost analysis. Include LCC-effective renewable energy technologies in the Program. Include as much power generation capacity as is feasible. (The Program for RE can always be reduced later, but it is often difficult to increase as the effort moves forward)
- If a project site provides strong opportunity for renewable energy, inform the leadership team as soon as possible so they can decide whether or not to make the project a renewable energy showcase project (or, possibly Net Zero).
- Ensure all cost figures appropriately cover sustainability and renewable energy requirements. When opportunities exist, request additional funding.

### **A/E Contracting for LEED® Silver Certification**

- Procurement staff are encouraged to have a LEED Green Associate® or LEED Accredited Professional® credential.
- Ensure the contract clearly indicates a requirement to design for a minimum of LEED Silver certification. Consider providing an incentive for higher-level certification.
- Include a requirement in the contract for the A/E of record to be responsible for submitting all certification-related documentation upon completion of construction.

### **Designing for LEED Silver Certification**

- VA Project Management staff are encouraged to have a LEED Green Associate® or LEED Accredited Professional® credential.
- Conduct a LEED® charrette as early in the design process as possible.
- VA prefers LEED Campus certification when a project includes at least 75% of the campus total building square footage. VA Project Managers are encouraged to request a recommendation from the LEED® consultant on whether to use Campus certification, or not, as consideration must be given to phasing and schedule impacts on certification achievement.
- VA Project Managers must bring a third-party Commissioning Agent (CxA) on-board as early as feasible. The CxA will play a very important role throughout design.
- Ensure construction documents include requirements to submit appropriate LEED documentation to support certification.
- Credit specific issues:
  - At this time, VA does not allow electric vehicle charging for facility visitors. Nor does VA provide fueling for visitors. As such, no VA project shall pursue the Green Vehicles credit within the Location and Transportation credit category.

## **Constructing for LEED Silver Certification**

- Ensure construction contracts include language indicating the project was designed to be LEED-certified and the construction contractor must avoid eliminating any LEED-specific design features or materials.
- Be familiar with which components of the project were included for LEED certification purposes. Protect those features!

The Point of Contact for this document is

James Symanski, Jr., P.E. ([james.symanski@va.gov](mailto:james.symanski@va.gov)),  
Facility Criteria Manager (Sustainable)  
Facilities Standards Service  
Office of Facilities Planning  
VA Office of Construction & Facilities Management

*LEED®*, *LEED Green Associate®*, and *LEED Accredited Professional* are registered trademarks of the U.S. Green Building Council® and are used with permission.

VERSION 2

Last updated: April 13, 2022