



The Administrator

October 25, 2013

The Honorable Ernest Moniz  
Secretary of Energy  
1000 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The purpose of this letter is to report the results of the U.S. General Services Administration's (GSA) review of green building certification systems (GBCS) and to provide recommendations to you, pursuant to section 436(h) of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (EISA).

EISA requires the Director of GSA's Office of Federal High-Performance Green Buildings to identify a certification system(s) every five years that is "most likely to encourage a comprehensive and environmentally sound approach to the certification of green buildings" and to provide a recommendation to the Secretary of Energy.

GSA makes the following six recommendations for the Federal government's use of green building certification systems. These recommendations were developed after a thorough evaluation of building certification systems by the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, commissioned by GSA in 2011; as well as the deliberations of an Interagency Ad-hoc Discussion Group co-chaired by GSA, the Department of Energy and the Department of Defense; public comments received; and input from GSA's Green Building Advisory Committee.

- 1. Agencies Should Continue To Use Third-Party Certification Systems.** GSA recommends that agencies continue to use third-party green building certification systems as one of many tools to evaluate building performance against federal statutory and executive order green building requirements. The use of these third-party certification systems, when properly aligned with government requirements, saves resources by eliminating the cost to the government of developing its own duplicative green building certification system while drawing on the expertise of the private sector.
- 2. Agencies Should Choose Between Two Certification Systems.** When choosing to use a green building certification system, GSA recommends that agencies use either the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) 2009 or the Green Building Initiative's Green Globes 2010 green building certification system. Both LEED 2009 and Green Globes 2010 are being revised by their system owners and may only be available for a limited time once the revised systems are finalized and made available in the market. GSA's recommendation "5" suggests actions the federal government should take when green building certification systems are revised.


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If pursuing a green building certification, GSA recommends that agencies achieve at least LEED Silver or 2 Green Globes for new construction and major renovation and achieve as many points in the energy and water categories as possible. This should not dissuade agencies from earning a higher certification level from either green building certification system if the agency deems such pursuit to be cost effective or necessary to allow the agency to continue its mission (e.g., water conservation in the southwest). If agencies decide to pursue green building certification for existing buildings through Green Globes or LEED, GSA recommends that agencies set a minimum goal of achieving LEED Certified or 1 Green Globe, provided that all the points associated with statutory and regulatory requirements are achieved.

- 3. Agencies Should Use Credits that Align with Federal Requirements.** Several agencies, including the Department of Energy and GSA, have identified credits within green building certification systems that align with federal statutory and executive order green building requirements. Many agencies have published these analyses on their websites. If agencies choose to use a green building certification system, GSA recommends that agencies use these publicly available analyses to focus on achieving those credits that help buildings meet federal green building requirements.
- 4. Agencies Should Select Only One System on an Agency, Bureau or Portfolio Basis.** GSA recommends that individual agencies be encouraged to use only one green building certification system at the agency, service, or portfolio level. GSA recommends that decisions to use multiple systems within one agency should be based on a determination by that agency that the organizational structure supports an effective use of training resources and that multiple systems effectively meet the agency's portfolio needs.
- 5. GSA Should Establish a Process to Keep Current with Revisions to the Rating Systems.** GSA recommends that the federal government formalize a process similar to GSA's green building certification system review to stay current with green building certification systems and their underlying standards. GSA suggests that its Office of Federal High-Performance Green Buildings track the evolution of green building certification systems and standards, and evaluate revisions to certification systems once they have been approved by their respective system owners. Within one year after a certification system is finalized by its respective system owner, GSA proposes to work with the Departments of Energy and Defense, and other agencies as appropriate, to discuss the finalized revisions and whether the federal government should adopt the newest version.
- 6. The Federal Government Should Participate in the Ongoing Development of Green Building Rating Systems.** GSA recommends that the federal government continue to work with green building certification system owners to better align with federal statutory and executive order green building requirements to ensure the federal government's needs are met.

If you require additional information, please contact me, or have a member of your staff contact Mr. Kevin Kampschroer, Director of GSA's Office of Federal High-Performance Green Buildings, at 202-501-4411.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Tangherlini', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dan Tangherlini  
Administrator