

EISA 436(h) Green Building Certification System Review: Update
11/8/12

The Office of Federal High-Performance Green Buildings (OFHPGB) completed and recently published its most recent evaluation of green building certification systems¹. The Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) conducted a fact finding of all the green building certification systems, tools and standards currently in the market. Three certification systems passed the screening criteria: Green Building Initiative's Green Globes® (2010), U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design® (2009), and the International Living Building Institute's Living Building Challenge™ (2011). Following screening, these three systems were then evaluated against a list of detailed criteria summarized below:

- Independence – assessors have no stake in outcome
- Availability – assessors are available to review buildings
- Verification – documented verification method
- Transparency – documented approach for inclusion of public comments in standard development and updates
 - Consensus based – per OMB circular A-119 & National Technology Transfer & Advancement Act
 - Robustness – efficient and sustainable use of water, energy, and other natural resources; Federal requirements are met for resource use as well as indoor environmental quality, building system controls, siting, integrated design, and renewable energy
 - System Maturity – effective links are available to the latest tools and standards; system included components to track performance post occupancy; system is consistently updated
 - Usability – affordable, technical knowledge to use the system is readily available, well defined and easily understood, professional rigor
 - National Recognition – recognized academically, within the private market and Federal sector

High performance building requirements for new construction and existing buildings from the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (EISA) and Executive Orders 13423 and 13514 form the foundation for the criteria that OFHPGB is applying in this review. These requirements include performance standards relating to energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, water use, waste reduction, materials use and employee commuting for all Federal facilities. The report shows that none of the green building rating systems cover 100 percent of Federal green building requirements for new construction, major renovations, and existing buildings.

Recognizing that there was a high level of interest in the green building certification system review, both within and outside the Federal sector, GSA asked the Department of Energy and the Department of Defense to co-chair an Ad-hoc interagency discussion group to work through a set of related questions and issues around building performance requirements, applicability of ASHRAE Standard 189.1, and use of green building certification systems using our recently published study on green building certification systems as a starting point. “Key questions” were identified for each interagency discussion group meeting (See attachment 1 for the schedule & key questions).

¹ Available at <http://www.gsa.gov/gbcertificationreview>

EISA 436(h) Green Building Certification System Review: Update

11/8/12

Agencies with large portfolio holdings such as the Department of State, National Park Service, Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Justice, and the Department of Agriculture, in addition to the Department of Energy and Department of Defense, are actively participating on the discussion group. The Forest Service has also been a participant in the interagency discussion group offering their expertise on the use of wood products in buildings.

Public Outreach

Since early May, this interagency discussion group has held numerous internal meetings and two public listening sessions. GSA hosted two public listening sessions where registered speakers gave oral remarks on what GSA and the other members of the Ad-hoc interagency discussion group should consider when deliberating on its recommendation to the Secretary of Energy. On June 25th 2012, GSA held an in-person listening session at GSA's Headquarters building (1800 F Street, NW, Washington, DC) where 12 speakers gave their remarks and approximately 40 people attended. GSA held a second public listening session over the phone on July 10th 2012 where 33 registered speakers gave their remarks and 219 people listened in over the phone. GSA also gave the public an opportunity to submit written comments if unable to attend either listening session.

GSA will make the interagency discussion group's findings and draft recommendations publicly available and will solicit public comments through the Federal Register over a period of 60 days on how the Federal government can best use green building certification systems. This Federal Register notice is not a proposed GSA rulemaking or GSA regulation; it is merely a request for information from external stakeholders to better inform the GSA Administrator's recommendation to the Secretary of Energy. After taking into consideration the deliberations of the interagency discussion group and the public comments from the listening sessions and Federal Register notice, the GSA Administrator will make his final recommendation to the Secretary of Energy, which we anticipate to be in the Spring of 2013.

Future Versions of Rating Systems

GSA closely monitors certification systems that are appropriate to the Federal government's building portfolios and performance targets, and participates in the development of many rating systems and industry standards. Concerns have been expressed over two new "Materials and Resources" credits proposed in LEED. However, the U.S. Green Building Council (owner of the LEED certification system) announced that LEED 2012 would be opened for further public comment, would not be voted on until June, 2013, and would in future be designated LEED v.4. The fourth public comment period, which closed in May, 2012, included modified requirements for these credits. An additional public comment period began October 2 and will close on December 10, 2012.

Only the current version of any green building certification system is under consideration. One of the items under discussion by the Ad-hoc group is how updates to green building certification systems should be addressed by the Federal government.

Attachment 1

EISA 436(h) Ad Hoc Interagency Discussion Group
Schedule & Discussion Topics

#1 - May 17: Kick-off Meeting

- A *Purpose & objectives of the Discussion Group*
- B *Federal requirements “landscape”*
- C *Overview of GBCS review report with focus on “robustness”*

#2 - May 29: New Construction: Federal Requirements. Metrics & Tools

Key Questions:

- A *Should the Federal building performance requirements be weighted?*
- B *What metrics should be used to demonstrate conformance with Federal requirements? When do calculations and evidence of intent serve as appropriate metrics?*
- C *What tools (metrics, documentation and assurance of conformance) can be used to meet requirements: GBCS, ASHRAE 189.1, Energy Star Federal High Performance and Sustainable Buildings Checklist, others?*
- D *Should ASHRAE 189.1 be adopted, in whole or in part, as a requirement for the Federal sector?*

#3 - June 12: Existing Buildings: Federal Requirements

Key Questions:

- A *Should the Federal building performance requirements be weighted?*

#4 - June 28: Existing Buildings: Metrics & Tools

Key Questions:

What metrics should be used to demonstrate conformance with Federal requirements? When do calculations and evidence of intent serve as appropriate metrics?

- A *What tools (metrics, documentation and assurance of conformance) can be used to meet requirements: GBCS, Energy Star Federal High Performance and Sustainable Buildings Checklist, others? Distinguish between tools that are designed to meet create or support specifications or performance metrics vs. tools designed to measure performance?*

#5 - July 12: Existing Buildings: Special Considerations

Key Questions:

- A *Should special consideration be given to requirements, metrics or documentation/reporting for these characteristics of existing buildings?*
 - i *Building types (e.g. hospitals, labs,*
 - ii *Facility locations (urban, rural, regional considerations)?*
 - iii *Leased buildings?*
 - iv *Historic buildings?*
 - v *High security buildings?*
- B *Are there unique opportunities or barriers at the portfolio scale?*

C *Cost and cost effectiveness considerations*

#6 - July 23: Recommendations on Tools to Meet Federal Requirements

Key Questions:

A *How can green building certification systems be most effectively used to advance high performance in buildings in the Federal sector?*

B *Are there other tools that should be used with or in lieu of green building certification systems?*

C *Is 3rd party certification required? Does it add value? Could 2nd party conformance assurance be considered?*

D *What is the Federal role in evolving green building certification systems and standards and other tools (i.e., Portfolio Manager's Guiding Principle's tool)?*