



LEED Documentation Tips—From LEED Reviewers

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1. How does the LEED review process work behind the scenes? Who are the reviewers?

- LEED reviewers and the GBCI customer service team are architects, engineers, interior designers, building scientists, and green building specialists.
- Reviewers want to certify your project. Make it easy for them!

2. When is it appropriate to contact GBCI? What should I expect in response?

- Use the Feedback button in LEED Online for submitting concerns about functionality of the LEED Online platform itself.
- For questions about LEED, your project, or review comments, contact the USGBC/GBCI Customer Service team at USGBC.org/contactus.
- The customer service team is separate from the GBCI reviewers. It usually responds to questions in writing.
- If you have a complex issue you want to discuss, you can request a call with a reviewer.
- Provide a list of specific questions. This ensures that the right review team members are on the call.
- Don't just provide your questions: reference the research you've already conducted on your question.

3. What are some tips for making my documentation clear to reviewers?

- Provide all information that is required, but be concise.
- Keep in mind, you've been working on this project for years, but the reviewer will spend only hours or days with it. Explain anything that could be confusing.
- Highlight or otherwise flag particularly relevant portions of documentation.
- Make sure your documentation defines a path showing that the requirements are met. Don't just say that you did something—demonstrate how you did it.
- For projects providing non-English-language documentation, translate relevant sections and/or identify areas of relevant sections and make it easy to copy and paste that text into an online translator.

4. What are the best uses of the credit narratives?



- Always write a narrative, even if it's very short.
- When you have a slight exception to a credit, acknowledge it and put it in a narrative.
- Use narratives to highlight relevant information in supporting documents. Make sure it's clear what supporting documents are associated with what forms and line items on calculators.

5. What are some tips for submitting high-quality LEED documentation?

- Double-check that you've included everything that's required.
- Make sure the whole project team is clear on things like project boundaries, square footage, occupancy, vegetated area, and number of parking spaces so that they are filling out forms and doing calculations consistently.
- Double-check those forms prior to submittal. As forms get filled at different times during a project, inconsistencies can appear.
- The LEED v4 Reference Guide includes a section on "Maintaining Consistency in the Documentation." Review this!
- Start out strong. A reviewer tries to award as many credits as possible in the Preliminary Review. A strong Preliminary Submittal makes for an easy Final Submittal.
- Use the calculators that LEED provides whenever possible, and submit live calculators rather than PDF copies.

6. What are other general mistakes to avoid?

- Check your occupancy numbers, including full-time equivalents (FTE).
- If you have incomplete spaces, take a consistent approach to documenting them in Project Information (PI) forms. Note your approach explicitly so it's not confusing to reviewers. Reference specific LEED Interpretations.
- Make sure you're clear on the definition of one building versus multiple, what constitutes a group submittal versus a single submittal, and how to define a "complete interior space."

7. What are good resources for making sure the project complies with the latest LEED requirements?

- LEED Reference Guide. Note the online version is automatically updated and contains additional resources.
- LEED Interpretations database. Stay familiar with rulings that could impact your projects.
- LEED v4: know your definitions from the Reference Guide.
- LEEDuser. This guidance is independent and unofficial, but the many experts here provide frank advice that can ease confusion.



8. Sometimes review comments seem inconsistent. Why, and what should I do?

- Some variation between review responses is inevitable, but reviewers are always working to be consistent. Contact GBCI to ask them to take a deeper look at inconsistent review comments.
- LEED credit language is developed to be specific but flexible enough to address a variety of project sizes and types. Sometimes it requires interpretation.
- As a rule, GBCI reviewers should not impose any requirements that are more stringent than those specified in the LEED credit language and reference guide.

9. What are some tips for responding to reviewer comments?

- Note what documentation was initially provided and how you responded. It's not always obvious!
- If the review comments say to do X, Y and Z, show how you did X, Y, and Z. Make it easy for a reviewer to follow.
- Reviewers should not raise new issues on the Final review that they missed in the Preliminary review. If this happens, contact GBCI to ask for a reversal documentation.