

LEED AP Update

In the eleven years that the U.S. Green Building Council has been providing accreditation for individuals in the LEED process, over 160,000 people have taken and passed the LEED AP exam. In 2009, the USGBC upgraded the program to gain ANSI certification and lend more weight to the LEED AP designation. The Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI) was formed to allow for a third party to certify new applicants, document credential maintenance and administer the exam process.

The accreditation process itself was also changed. Instead of a single LEED AP designation, two new levels were formed and those with LEED AP's were given a designation based on the exam that they passed. The levels built were:



The LEED Green Associate

This entry-level designation is designed for professionals who support green building design, construction, and operations. It provides a credential that proves you have basic knowledge of green building principles and practices of LEED. 15 Hours of continuing education is required every 2 years.



LEED AP (With Specialty)

This designation is for professionals participating in the design and construction phases of LEED buildings. The BD+C designation is the specialty denoted in this logo, but similar logos exist for LEED APs who achieved their designation by passing the exam for LEED AP Operations + Maintenance or other rating systems. 30 Hours of continuing education is required every 2 years to maintain this accreditation.



LEED Fellow

This is the highest level of professional accreditation to distinguish those that have been in the field of sustainability for at least ten years and held a LEED AP for at least eight years. They are seen as technically proficient in LEED and a mentor in the field of sustainability. 30 Hours of continuing education is required every 2 years to maintain this accreditation.



LEED AP (Without Specialty)

This designation is for those that passed the LEED AP exam prior to the transition in 2009. The LEED AP (without specialty) is a lifetime designation and requires no recertification or credential maintenance.

At the time of transition in 2009, the 150,000 individuals that had already earned a LEED AP were given a choice:

Option One: Remain a LEED AP (Without Specialty) for life, never having to recertify or participate in continuing education.

Option Two: Opt in to become a LEED AP (With Specialty) by either earning 30 hours of continuing education in a prescribed manner or retesting. Every two years you would need to have taken an additional 30 hours of continuing education and pay the credential maintenance fee.

Remaining a LEED AP (Without Specialty) was a tempting route, with the only real danger being that the designation could become outdated or lose some of its value in the LEED process.

Out of the 150,000 individuals of the LEED APs before the transition, approximately 90,000 decided to remain LEED APs (Without Specialty). 60,000 people decided to try for the LEED AP (With Specialty).

As of March 2011, only 5,000 people have passed both tests to become a LEED AP (With Specialty) and 25,000 have passed the LEED Green Associate Exam. Beginning in 2012, the number of LEED APs (With Specialty) is also expected to drop once those that opted into the new system fail to meet their continuing education requirements.

Credential Maintenance Program (Continuing Education)

In the initial two-year period that followed the transition to the new credential system, LEED APs that opted into the new system had to follow a prescribed path of compliance to mimic the areas of education that would be required to pass the new test. A certain number of hours in areas that focused on different parts of LEED were required. Additionally, six of these hours had to be LEED Specific. To qualify, they had to be approved activities that concentrated wholly on the LEED rating system of your specialty. For LEED Green Associates, only three hours were required in each two-year reporting period.

There are eight ways to earn continuing education (CE) hours. Some have limits and restrictions for each two-year reporting period. They are as follows:

1. **Education Reviewing Body (ERB) approved activities** – Professional development activities that have been reviewed and approved by an ERB. These CE hours can be LEED specific and there is no limit as to how many hours you can report in this activity every two years.
2. **Live Presentations** – Attending a presentation or a webinar in real-time. Since they are not approved by an ERB, they cannot be LEED specific. You are only allowed to use 5 CE hours in this category per reporting period. [Participating in a live MCAA Green Building webinar can earn you 1 CE each time in this category.](#)

3. **Self Study** – Structured study that includes audio, reading, or downloading of archived webinars. You are allowed only 5 CE hours per reporting period, but [each archived MCAA Green Building webinar counts as 1 CE in this category](#). Self Study hours can be LEED specific if it is reviewing the current LEED Rating system (one CE hour only).
4. **College and University Courses** – Completing or teaching a green building course at an accredited college or university. You can earn one CE per classroom hour and there is no limit on CE reported in this category.
5. **Certificates, professional licenses and credentials** – In your initial earning of a certificate, professional or credential related to green building. You can earn 1 CE per certificate and 3 CE for licenses. Earning a plumbing license does count for this the first time, but can only be used once. Continuing education for state plumbing licenses can also be used for LEED continuing education hours, but should be allotted in categories that denote how they were earned like live presentations or self study.
6. **Committee and Volunteer Work** – This is only for committees like the USGBC, GBCI or local GBC committees. If you are part of your local GBC's committee, you can earn 2 CE per reporting period for holding a leadership position and 0.5 CE for each meeting attended. There is a limit of 4 CE per reporting period.
7. **Authorship** – Publishing articles and books that are related to green building. You can earn 3 CE for each article and 10 CE for each book with no limit. However, every article and book will be audited if you report CE in this category.
8. **LEED Project Participation** – For each LEED credit or prerequisite that you work on for a LEED project, you can earn 1 CE hour. There is a limit of 10 CE hours allowed in this category per reporting cycle, but all of these CE hours are LEED specific if the LEED project was being certified in the same rating system that you earned your accreditation.

For more information on LEED AP credential maintenance and the LEED 2012 update, download the recent [LEED Update Webinar](#) and earn 1 CE hour in the process under self study.

To get emails on all upcoming MCAA Green Building Webinars, contact Sean McGuire at smcguire@mcaa.org. Webinars are free and if you participate live, you can earn you one CE hour in the “live presentation” category.