



# LEED AP Yet?

By Deepika Padam, LEED AP

One of the most frequently asked questions in the green building industry today is, “How can I become a LEED Accredited Professional (LEED AP)?” Before delving into the answer, let’s clarify the terminology since, in the context of the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED Green Building Rating System, the term “accredited” is often confused with “certified.”

In simple terms, a person can be accredited, while buildings are certified. According to the U.S. Green Building Council, “LEED Professional Accreditation distinguishes building professionals with the knowledge and skills to successfully steward the integrated design and LEED certification process. LEED Accredited Professionals have demonstrated a thorough understanding of green building practices and principles and familiarity with LEED requirements, resources, and processes.”

So just how does one become a LEED AP? The answer is quite simple; you just have to pass the LEED exam. But first you need to decide which exam you should take. USGBC offers three exam tracks:

- LEED for New Construction, version 2.2 (LEED-NC)
- LEED for Commercial Interiors, version 2.0 (LEED-CI)
- LEED for Existing Buildings, version 2.0 (LEED-EB)

You only need to take one of these exams to become a LEED AP (you may choose to take all three). Generally speaking, if you work mostly on building interiors and tenant improvement projects, then you should consider taking the LEED-CI exam. If you work mostly on renovation projects, consider the LEED-EB exam. For all new construction and major renovation projects, consider the LEED-NC exam.

All LEED APs contribute one point toward a project’s certification under the Innovation credit (IDc2) irrespective of the exam taken. Please note that only one point is granted toward the certification no matter how many LEED APs are on the team or how many exams they have passed. There are no prerequisites for the exam, anyone can become a LEED AP.

To prepare for the exam, start at the website [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org) and visit the LEED AP section. It explains the contents of the exams and presents sample questions, including preparation tips. Many find that the most useful study tool is the LEED Reference Guide.

A large portion of the exam’s content is covered in this single resource, including the intents, requirements, submittals, technologies and strategies of every LEED credit.

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Other major parts of the exam relate to the coordination of team members and the LEED on-line application process. Again, the website is the best resource for this information. If you have gone through the certification process of a LEED project, this should be second nature to you. If not, looking over the application of another project can guide you through the coordination and application process. A clear understanding of roles and responsibilities of various team members throughout the project construction and LEED certification process may also be helpful. Explore the CIR section of the website to understand how the Credit Interpretation Rulings (CIRs) work. Through the website, you may also review various sample letter templates (used in the LEED project application process).

Basic knowledge of life cycle cost analysis may also be helpful in preparation of the LEED exam. There are no strenuous calculations in the exam, but you should have an understanding of the formulae and technical information used in the Calculation sections of each LEED credit within the Reference Guide.

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You may also choose to take the web-based training course offered by USGBC, “Essentials of LEED Professional Accreditation.”

LEED AP exams are offered all year long. It’s a computer-based exam offered at testing centers throughout the country. You may schedule it at your convenience, choosing the date, time and location from the website. The exam fee is \$250 for USGBC members and \$350 for non-members. The best part of this exam - you’ll know your result immediately! <<

*For more information on the LEED exam, please visit [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org). Good luck!*