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## The Cost of GREEN

Does a sustainable facility really cost more?

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## Evolution of Green Rating Programs

As standards in specific categories of building products are developed, green design programs typically refer to those standards as the benchmarks in various credit areas. Most government agencies, when looking to establish guidelines for greening their facilities, will look first to existing guidelines or standards rather than develop standards of their own.

After 10 to 15 years of development, USGBC's LEED program and Green Building Initiative's (GBI) Green Globes program now look very different than their early versions.

The first LEED building certifications occurred around 1999/2000, with a minimum level of 26 points required for certification. Point distribution was distributed among five categories: Indoor Environmental Quality (23 percent); Sustainable Sites (22 percent); Water Efficiency (8 percent); Energy and Atmosphere (27 percent); and Materials and Resources (20 percent). Over the years, the number and distribution of points have evolved. Today, the original LEED for New Construction has been joined by LEED for Existing Buildings, LEED for Commercial Interiors, LEED-Core and Shell, LEED for Neighborhood Development, and so on.

The LEED Sustainable Sites credit category originally addressed the heat island effect through roofing by requiring ENERGY STAR-labeled cool roofing products. As knowledge increased and further standards were developed for cool roofing, the credit was modified to be defined by use of the Solar Reflectance Index (SRI) for both low-sloped and steep-sloped roofs.

The Green Globes program started out with a much different history than LEED. GBI first developed Green Globes based on BREEAM, which hailed from the UK, was introduced into Canada, then developed into an online rating system licensed in the U.S. In 2005, ANSI recognized GBI as an accredited national standards developer. Green Globes eventually became an ANSI standard in April 2010.

Green Globes has four achievement levels, with a 35-percent minimum requirement for certification. It is based on percentage rather than points to allow for instances where there are "non-applicable" circumstances; e.g. there are no oil-fired burners on-site, or local codes override certain criteria. Green Globes requires a certain percentage of points in *each* category in order to reduce "point chasing."

Buildings in different locations may have very different impacts on occupants and the environment. Identical building products in different buildings may perform quite differently. As the USGBC's PVC task group found in its February 2007 report, awarding a credit for avoiding PVCs "could steer decision-makers toward using materials that are worse on most environmental impacts."



**Profit is a key  
criterion for  
sustainability:  
If an act is not  
profitable, it is not  
sustainable.**