

BUILDING RATING SYSTEMS:

MORE OPTIONS, MORE OPPORTUNITIES

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Over the years, sustainability has evolved from a focus on the environment around us and how we use the resources that it provides for the built environment. How we operate our buildings and how these buildings come to be gave birth to green building certification systems as early as 1990, when the Building Research Establishment, LLC (BRE) created a voluntary environmental assessment method, BRE Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM), to reduce the environmental impact of buildings. Now, more than 16 rating systems exist around the world, including many regional adaptations to already existing green building rating systems such as BREEAM and the United States Green Building Council's (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) building certification.¹

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While the initial focus of building certification was on new construction, this left a big gap between building design and actual operation. Green building rating systems began to include certification under the “existing building” or “in-use” label to provide a vehicle for building operators to show that their facilities were sustainable and energy efficient. This was also a way for operators of buildings certified under the new construction scheme to demonstrate performance at or above the design parameters.

Some found that green building certification did not equate to operational sustainability. For example, Manhattan’s Bank of America tower, which achieved LEED Platinum in 2010, was found to be one of the city’s biggest energy hogs in a 2015 Green Building Economic Impact Study released by USGBC.² While this is not the case for every building, it proves the need for continual improvement beyond building design through efficient operations.

Just as we learn from what works and what doesn’t in our buildings, building rating systems have also been updated to keep up with technology and embrace innovation. The availability of multiple rating systems in the market has also helped facility managers make the case for building certification.

One such market is the United States. For many years, LEED was the leading (and only) green building rating system marketed for either new construction or existing buildings. Now, building operators have other options: Green Globes and BREEAM USA. Green Globes was adapted in 2004 by the Green Building Initiative (GBI) from the Canadian web-based, interactive learning tool of the same name. More recently, BuildingWise and BRE modified the UK-established BREEAM to fit U.S. needs, resulting in BREEAM USA.

We asked BREEAM USA and GBI to answer a few questions about their building certification systems (specifically for existing buildings) and their take on the U.S. building certification market.

BREEAM USA

What are the benefits of certifying a building through your rating system? In particular, how does the process help facility managers?

The increasing demands from regulators and the market for greater sustainability in building developments has, perhaps inevitably, led to a rash of “green” claims for building products and services. The fact that many of these are not backed up by any credible scientific data or third-party certification can make selecting them for use in a development project a risky proposition. Achieving a more sustainable built environment depends on building owners and facility managers being able to trust the claims made for building products, systems and services.

Providing impartial, authoritative information that the industry can trust is a key element of the work that BRE undertakes through all the various programs and services that it runs, including BREEAM USA In-Use. One way that facility managers are assured that products and services can be trusted to perform as claimed is to select those that have been appropriately certified. Expert, independent approval and certification schemes ensure not only that sustainability claims are substantiated, but also that the products and services meet performance standards as claimed.

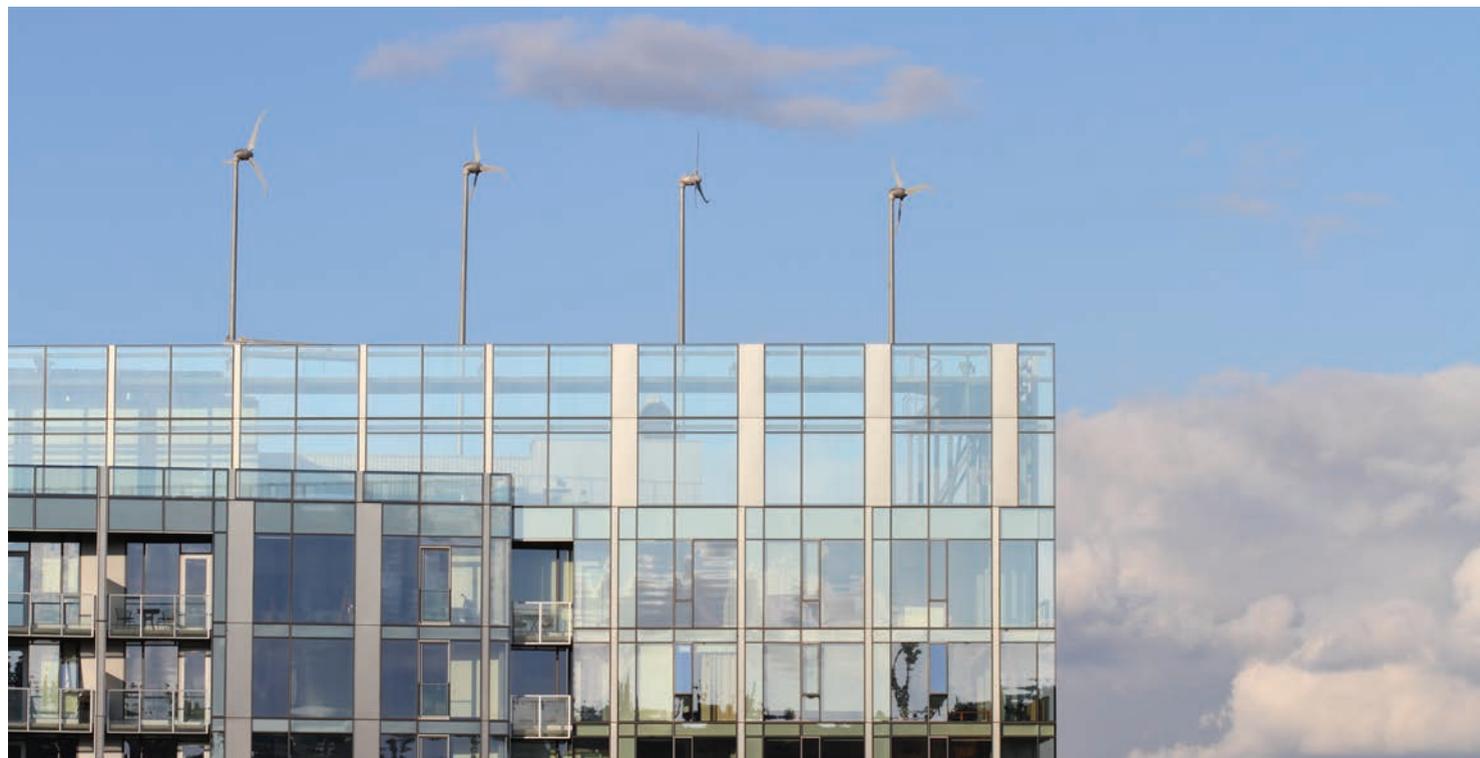
BREEAM USA In-Use is all about outcomes. It’s a framework based on scientific research for understanding how your building is performing today and how to improve building performance and reduce environmental impacts going forward. The online assessment tool assists FMs in making informed decisions on next steps, based on your budget, by providing robust and accessible information that support continual benchmarking and ongoing improvements.

What does the existing building certification market look like at the moment?

It is definitely increasing. We are seeing continual growth in both developed and new markets. A true indicator is that all markets display a hunger to improve. The main problem has been the association between green certification systems and costs. Many buildings have not been able to make significant headway because the starting point is too high for them.

For buildings to gain the information they need to make plans for improvement, they must first be able to launch a robust system that can provide them with quality measurements without the huge outlay of costs or barriers to participation. BREEAM USA In-Use makes those necessary starting steps easy: results are immediate, what to do next is stated clearly and the costs to get results are low.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON BREEAM USA, VISIT:
www.breeamusa.com, or contact www.breeamusa.com/contact
or info@breamerica.com.**



Shrinking budgets have facility managers going the ABC (all-but-certified) route instead of attaining certification. How do you respond when asked, “Why should I get certified?”

Certification in BREEAM In-Use provides market recognition for the performance being achieved by the building, signed off by a third-party providing an impartial assessment. Tenants are provided assurance that the claims made about the performance are not simply “greenwash.” While building owners, facility managers, investment managers and building occupiers can use the BREEAM In-Use system to benchmark and manage performance internally using the real-time unverified score, certification allows them to realize value beyond the direct savings generated by running a more efficient building or operations: commanding higher rental rates, retaining and attracting new tenants, and lower financing costs.

However, the benefits to certification need to outweigh the costs of the certification program. BREEAM In-Use is broken down into three parts: an assessment of the environmental performance of a building, the operations of the building, and how clients (occupiers) are managing their activities within the building. Owners or property managers can choose to complete one, two, or all three parts.

Current performance can be measured against one or more parts and an unverified score instantly provided at a cost of US\$1,000. This provides access to the measurement portal

for up to one year and allows the user to determine what improvements can be made within their available budget to improve their score. This is well below comparable systems’ costs and the barriers to entry are much lower: there are no prerequisites to receiving a building score or to achieving certification. Certification confirms the performance achieved and yearly recertification confirms ongoing commitment to achieving higher performing best practices.

How has the introduction of competition impacted the building certification market in the United States?

All competition is good, especially when we focus on the green building industry. There are so many existing buildings in the USA that all the certifying systems need to pull their socks up and get buildings benchmarked and certified. BREEAM has the advantage that it simplifies access and provides recognition without compromising on standards.

What differentiates you from your competition?

BREEAM USA In-Use has no prerequisites to get started — it is available to every existing building regardless of age, size or condition. It provides an easy-to-access online questionnaire to measure performance that can be continually updated for up to a year and which provides guidance on how building performance can be improved. Finally, BREEAM USA has a very affordable entry cost of US\$1,000 to complete the building registration process.

GREEN GLOBES

What are the benefits of certifying a building through your rating system? In particular, how does the process help facility managers?

Green Globes is an interactive design guidance, environmental assessment and rating tool introduced in the United States in 2004 by the Green Building Initiative (GBI). The goal of Green Globes is to promote resource-efficient, healthier and environmentally sustainable buildings using credible and practical approaches. The assessment process promotes interaction between the assigned assessor and building owners and/or facility managers. New and existing buildings adhering to Green Globes criteria typically yield reduced operational costs, increased occupant satisfaction and minimized environmental impacts.

What does the existing building certification market look like at the moment?

The market for existing building certification has experienced a surge in recent months due to increased tax and lender incentives. Green Globes has been in the U.S. market for 12 years. As of Aug. 21, 2016, GBI had awarded 822 certifications under Green Globes programs, representing more than 107 million square feet.

Green Globes for Existing Buildings can be applied to a variety of building types regardless of size or budget. Of the 822 certified buildings, 440 have been certified under the existing buildings program, representing more than 76 million square feet. An additional 245 projects, representing nearly 61 million square feet, are currently undergoing Green Globes assessment, 52 under the Existing Buildings program, representing more than 39 million square feet.

Shrinking budgets have facility managers going the ABC (all-but-certified) route instead of attaining certification. How do you respond when asked, "Why should I get certified?"

Facility managers using Green Globes can benchmark a building's current operations and performance and monitor both over time to ensure the building retains or improves its level of sustainability. The Green Globes assessment provides direct interaction with a third-party assessor, who creates a detailed assessment report outlining the current sustainability achievements and areas of opportunity in a cost-effective manner.

How has the introduction of competition impacted the building certification market in the United States?

While Green Globes is one of several rating system options in the U.S., the GBI recognizes that the availability of multiple approaches for assessing and certifying buildings fosters competition and innovation. Rating system developers can learn from each other and grow along with the evolving built environment. In addition, competition benefits end users because they can choose the best option for their needs and goals.

What differentiates you from your competition?

GBI and Green Globes are known for flexibility, fast response times and ease of use. Green Globes has no prerequisites and allows criteria to be classified as non-applicable by the third-party assessor. No GBI-specific forms are required for credit. Instead, standard documentation that supports the responses — such as utility bills, equipment operating manuals (boiler, water heater, etc.), an environmental management plan and goals, and an emergency response plan, to name a few — is accepted. In addition, GBI offers high-touch customer service, providing clients with direct access to their GBI project manager throughout the assessment process, and the opportunity to meet face-to-face with the assigned assessor.

These attributes have made GBI's Green Globes a solution of choice for a variety of owners and facility managers from federal agencies, such as the Veterans Administration, to corporate portfolio managers such as Whole Foods, Fidelity Investments and MGM Resorts.

All Green Globes assessments begin with the completion of an interactive online survey that calculates a preliminary score based upon the responses. Existing Building assessments include a site visit by a third-party assessor who typically has more than 10 years of experience in sustainability and must be completed prior to Green Globes certification being awarded. During the assessment process, the assessor will review the survey, verify the responses with the supporting documentation provided and visually inspect the building. All assessments include a detailed report containing the final rating, the assessor's evaluation of compliance with the Green Globes criteria and recommendations for future improvement.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON GREEN GLOBES, VISIT:
www.thegbi.org, or contact info@thegbi.org or +1-503-274-0448.**

Enhancing building performance

While certification is not a requirement in most countries (including the United States), the availability of more building rating systems certainly provides more opportunities for building owners and facility managers to certify their buildings to show that they are doing their part to be a corporate socially responsible organization. If making the business case for certification is still an uphill battle, facility managers can still use the different rating systems as guides to running a more sustainable operation, what is typically called the “all-but-certified” (ABC) option.

In the ABC option for an existing building, the key is to modify building operations to the standards of a green certification without actually receiving the certification. Because guidance and resources for these systems are available to users (generally at little to no cost), building owners or managers can use them to enhance their building’s performance without spending the additional money on consulting, third-party assessors and/or certification fees. **FMJ**

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experience in the built environment ranging from condition assessments to sustainability audits. She has presented on the subject of sustainability and the built environment to property and facility managers in various venues, including Greenbuild and IFMA’s World Workplace Conference and Expo. She co-wrote IFMA’s Green Rating Systems Guide and is an IFMA instructor for the Sustainability Facility Professional® credential. Portalatin teaches FM technology in Catholic University’s facility management master’s program.



Barry Giles is the CEO of BREEAM USA. He is a BREEAM International, BREEAM In-Use Assessor and BREEAM Fellow and the leader in developing the partnership between BuildingWise and BRE Group to create the BREEAM USA

standard. Giles was a LEED for Existing Buildings pioneer and a founding member of its core committee and, as a LEED Fellow, has continued to assist the USGBC in the development of the LEED EB rating system. Giles has been previously recognized by Monterey County as the “Green Person of the Year,” and was invited by Mayor Gavin Newsom to be on San Francisco’s Green Building Task Force, which led to the city’s requirement of energy benchmarking for all existing buildings.



Vicky Worden is the executive director of the Green Building Initiative (GBI), with more than 20 years of experience working with industries, governments, and a variety of non-profit organizations in the advancement of broad

sustainability objectives. She holds an MBA from Loyola University in Maryland and a bachelor of arts in political science from West Chester University in Pennsylvania. Prior to GBI, she was president of Worden Associates, Inc., a consulting firm where she worked to progress sustainability goals in sectors that included government agencies, international non-profits and diverse industries, such as solar, furniture, composites, wood products and rainwater harvesting.