

Stakeholder Engagement is Key to LEED-EB

>> BY TOMMY LINSTROTH, LEED AP

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Existing Buildings (LEED-EB), huh? There are plenty of classes out there. All taught by LEED faculty. And they will give you a great overview of the five categories, 85 points (for EB 2.0; 91 points for LEED EB: Operations and Maintenance) and credit requirements. How do you get water credits? Reduce consumption compared to the baseline by 20 or 30 percent. How about the materials credits? Simple, just start using recycled janitorial products and increase the amount of materials your building's occupants are recycling.

Not enough to help you through? There are always LEED consultants out there. How do I get the water credits, you may ask. Likely they'll respond, "Cut water consumption compared to the baseline by 20 or 30 percent." Yeah, we can read the reference guide, too. I don't mean to sound down on either LEED training or LEED consultants (as I am one). Both offer much useful implementation, and the right consultant can help you take the LEED rating systems and actually implement it, rather than regurgitate what the credits are.

And this is the crux of the matter. You know the LEED-EB credits and basically what to do, but how is implementation established? It's easy to say, "We're going to use all green cleaners, and that's it." But is it? This has not been my experience — by a long shot. So, what I'd like to spend the rest of this column writing about is the actual implementation process — the most important but least talked about component of pursuing LEED certification.

Having a well thought-out implementation plan is critical, because as anyone who has tried implementing a new program knows, there is often great resistance to change. People are inclined to do what has worked before — why do something different now? Overcoming that mentality is the essential step for any new program, and especially sustainability related programs.

Let's look at the simple strategy of using green cleaners. Basically, to get the LEED credit MR 4, Sustainable Cleaning Products and Materials, you need to require the use of



■ The Atlanta Clean Air Campaign recently visited Georgia buildings to champion the improvement of indoor air quality. >> Photo courtesy of Melaver, Inc.

products that meet the GreenSeal GS 37 standard, and janitorial paper products and trash bags that meet EPA recycled content guidelines. Seems easy enough. Now, if you supply all chemical and janitorial products for your building, this may be a bit easier — you just order only what qualifies. The cleaning crew comes in one day and there they sit — the new approved cleaners. Even if you do purchase the cleaners, this isn't the ideal implementation method. Now, if your contracted cleaning company purchases its own chemicals, this gets even more complicated — you have now affected its supply chain, and likely put the onus of finding the right cleaning product on that company and its suppliers.

Neither of these methodologies of straightforward change requirements is ideal. A route that may garner more success — and this will hold true for any LEED credit pursued — is to engage the stakeholders at the earliest point possible. Changing cleaning supplies? Get your janitorial crew in there and talk to them about it. Not just the regional manager, who may not trickle down the information or follow up when there is turnover, but the nightly cleaners and crews. Find out what they have used in the past — some products work better than others. Inform them *why* you are trying to do this. It is not just a LEED point, it is the workers' health you are also concerned about — the cleaning crew shouldn't be exposed to toxic cleaners anymore than the building occupants. Engaging them early and often

in the process will help the crew buy in to what you are trying to achieve — and help ensure ongoing success. If you just buy the materials, do you think they ever may just bring in their own because they think they clean better? Or, when there is turnover, that the new crew will know what cleaners need to be used? Engage early and engage often to success implementing new, sustainable methods into your building and follow up for feedback. You get a LEED point for each 30 percent of purchases that comply — if you don't seek feedback and follow up during the process, you'll be the one hung out to dry when its time to show the invoices for documentation and you find out that they really reverted back to the wrong cleaner.

This whole column just focused on something that sounds relatively easy — switching cleaners. Just think of the other 80 credits. I'll repeat it again: engage stakeholders early and often. Stakeholders include you and your staff, the building tenants, the subcontractor crews, the suppliers and even guests coming into the building. For example, when pursuing the credits for low-emitting paints, you'd better talk early to the tenants, subcontractor and supplier. When doing a build out, talk to the tenants so they do not specify a color that is not available in a low-VOC format. Otherwise, you'll be hearing about it. And the painters had better know that a specific type of paint is required, which involves the supplier recommending the right product.

Do not get discouraged; this is a completely manageable process. This column is just to reinforce, it is not just about knowing what the LEED credits are. As G.I. Joe said, "knowing is half the battle." The other half is successful implementation, and a little bit of stakeholder engagement can go a long way. **SF**



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Linstroth in coming issues of Sustainable Facility.