



Applying LEED to airport projects

June 2026

What are the advantages of using LEED for airport facilities?

LEED-certified airport facilities exemplify the triple bottom line, benefiting people, planet, and profit. LEED certification supports healthier, more productive spaces; reduces environmental impact; delivers significant utility cost savings; and enhances building value. These facilities are designed and operated to use less water, energy, and natural resources, ultimately reducing the overall impact of development at the local, regional, and global levels.

Around the world, teams are using LEED to deliver more efficient, equitable, and sustainable projects—from airport terminals to fire stations to airport office buildings. LEED is helping the transportation sector achieve ambitious sustainability goals while enabling airport projects to realize substantial savings in operating costs.

Airport terminal and concourse projects have distinct energy and water demands, high foot traffic, unique ventilation requirements, substantial equipment loads, and 24/7 operations—all of which make implementing strong efficiency measures challenging. Recognizing these unique conditions, USGBC and GBCI regularly provide targeted support to airport terminal projects.

How can airport facilities earn LEED certification?

Airport facilities can earn certification under different LEED rating systems at various stages of a building's lifecycle.

- LEED for Building Design and Construction (BD+C): New Construction and Major Renovation is typically the most appropriate rating system for new builds or major renovations. At least 60% of the project's gross floor area must be [complete](#) at the time of certification, and the certification must cover the building's entire gross floor area. For airport projects, this can include areas dedicated to both administrative and support functions.
- LEED for Operations and Maintenance (O+M): Existing Buildings or Interiors applies to facilities or spaces that have been fully operational and occupied for at least one year. Projects may be undergoing improvements or little to no construction, but must include the building's entire gross floor area. Unless otherwise noted in credit-specific requirements, this coverage includes process-related operations and performance metrics.

How many airport projects are registered and certified under LEED?

As of June 2026, there are 659 LEED-certified and registered projects with the airport space type, which was made available to projects in [LEED Online in 2018](#). This represents 422 million square feet or 39 million square meters across the globe.

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What issues are unique to airport projects?

Airport terminal projects face distinct challenges—such as large numbers of occupants, baggage handling systems, security equipment, airplane plug loads, high equipment loads, specialized energy and water needs, unique ventilation requirements, and programmatic relationships with other buildings—that make implementing strong efficiency measures difficult. In addition, standard space types at airports, such as office and maintenance buildings, can encounter unique barriers to achieving site and location credits.

How does LEED address the unique challenges of airport projects?

LEED v5 is the most current version of the rating system and is available for all commercial projects pursuing certification under New Construction, Core and Shell, Commercial Interiors, and Existing Buildings. Many airport-focused strategies developed under previous LEED versions have been adapted for LEED v5 or are now included in the new Project Priorities and Innovation credit category. Credits in this category offer greater flexibility to address unique project contexts and priorities, including typology, culture, location, areas of innovation, and specific performance objectives. Sector-specific Project Priority credits are being developed on an ongoing basis and will be released in the [Project Priority Library](#) for use.

When developing LEED v4 and LEED v4.1, certain prerequisites and credits were adapted to support the unique needs of airport projects. Incorporating feedback from industry stakeholders, LEED has published industry-specific guidance through LEED Interpretations, Alternative Compliance Paths (ACPs), and pilot credits.

The following items may be of interest to airport projects. Many are designed to help projects with high process loads or high occupancy meet the intent of the credits.

- The [Energy Jumpstart Pilot Credit](#) is available for O+M projects with process loads of at least 60% that are unable to meet the Minimum Energy Performance prerequisite in the LEED v4 O+M rating system.
- [LEED Interpretation 10493](#) allows LEED v4 and v4.1 BD+C projects using whole building energy simulation that can document more than 50% unregulated process load to use BD+C: Core & Shell energy performance improvement thresholds in lieu of the New Construction thresholds.
- The [Whole Project Water Use Reduction Pilot Credit](#) allows LEED v4 BD+C projects to quantify water use through whole-building water balance modeling, similar to the whole-building energy modeling compliance path. It also enables projects to capture significant water savings that previously went unrecognized, such as process water.
- The [LEED v4 Energy Update](#) is available for projects with a high percentage of unregulated or process loads can continue using C&S threshold and are also encouraged to consider [LEED v4.1 credit substitution](#).

Additional LEED Interpretations for airports can be found in the [Addenda Database](#) by entering “airport” in the main search bar.

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How does the Arc-platform relate to airports?

The LEED v4.1 O+M rating system offers a unique, performance-based pathway to certify existing buildings and interior spaces. It leverages [legacy Arc](#), a state-of-the-art platform for collecting, managing, and benchmarking performance across five categories: energy, water, waste, transportation, and human experience.

What does this mean for airports? LEED v4.1 enables airport projects to benchmark against similar high-performance facilities worldwide. Facility managers and owners can continuously monitor data and make informed decisions to optimize building performance using real-time analytics. This performance pathway can be used to certify and recertify projects every three years. [Learn more](#).

[LEED v5 BD+C](#), [ID+C](#) and [O+M](#) rating systems allow all space types to certify utilizing the new [Arc experience](#), offering greater fluidity and flexibility for users. Performance tracking, certification, and reporting are all delivered in one place.

How can multiple buildings and structures in a campus setting earn LEED certification?

Airports often operate at a large scale, with multiple buildings spread across a single site. These buildings, people, and processes are interconnected. To address this, [LEED Campus Guidance](#) was introduced for projects on a shared site under the control of a single entity. Its application to LEED projects in airport settings reflects both the complexity and commonality of buildings and infrastructure on a single site.

LEED Campus Guidance is a useful tool for airports with multiple buildings, shared utilities, and site-wide management policies. By using this approach, airport operators and project teams can benefit from a streamlined review process and reduced certification fees under the Master Site, supporting successful implementation of LEED projects.

How can I use LEED to certify the entire airport?

Airports are leveraging the LEED for Cities and Communities rating system to certify performance across the entire airport. This certification program is transforming how airport communities are planned, developed, and operated to improve overall sustainability and quality of life. The LEED framework encompasses social, economic, and environmental performance indicators and strategies, providing a clear, data-driven approach to benchmarking and communicating progress.

What technical resources are available for airport projects pursuing LEED?

There are various resources available for airports pursuing LEED certification.

Industry Report:

- [LEED in Motion: Transportation](#)

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Industry Articles:

- [6 airport megaprojects taking flight in 2025](#)
- [An Introduction to LEED Airports: 4 facts to know about LEED-certified airports](#)
- [PEER Certified Airports in India take flight power resilience](#)
- [USGBC+ LEED-certified airports help provide safe and sustainable travel](#)
- [Teaming up on carbon with Costa Rica Green Building Council](#)
- [How Colombia's "Golden" airport achieved LEED Platinum](#)
- [Kansas City International Airport Showcases How LEED Serves Infrastructure Projects](#)

Where can I find more owner profiles and case studies on airports?

Denver International Airport (DEN)

- [LEED projects at DEN](#):

El Dorado Airport (BOG)

- First airport in the world obtains LEED Zero Energy Certification, [El Dorado Airport](#)

Hamad International Airport (HIA)

- In Doha, Qatar the [HIA Central Concourse](#) includes “innovative measures of energy efficiency across the entire building, thus staying true to its commitment to improving environmental performance and effectively addressing climate change.”

Kansas City Airport (KCI)

- [Kansas City International Airport](#) new LEED Gold

Istanbul Airport (IST)

- [Istanbul Airport](#) includes one of the largest individual LEED certified projects in the world.
- LEED commercial interior projects [Istanbul Y.H. THY A.O Main Lounge](#) and [Istanbul Y.H. THY A.O Domestic Lounge](#)

Orlando International Airport (MCO)

- LEED v4 certified projects: [MCO South Airport APM & ITF](#) and [GOAA Maintenance Administration Building](#)

Port Authority New York New Jersey

- LaGuardia Airport Terminal B is world's first Airport: Terminal/Concourse project to earn LEED v4 GOLD under the more stringent v4: [LGA Phase 1 : CCB+HH+CHRP](#)
- [Terminal 4](#) at New York's JFK International Airport LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance Gold certification

Salt Lake City (SLC)

- Salt Lake City International Airport has several LEED Gold certified projects already complete as part of the New SLC: [SLCIA Terminal Replacement Project](#), [SLCIA North Concourse West](#), [SLCIA South Concourse East](#),

San Francisco International Airport (SFO)

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- LEED v4 BD+C: New Construction Platinum certified [SFO Harvey Milk Term. 1 Boarding Area B](#)
- Entire [San Francisco International Airport](#) certified using LEED for Cities and Communities framework

San Diego International Airport (SAN)

- LEED certified as existing building [SAN facilities maintenance building](#)

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA)

- LEED certification achievements: [Sea-Tac Airport North Satellite, and Sea-Tac Airport Concourse D Holdroom](#)

View non-confidential LEED-registered and certified projects in the [Project Directory](#) by entering keywords like “airport” in the search bar. This will display projects with those terms in their titles. You can also filter by region and rating system to refine results.

Does USGBC offer education for project teams **interested in green building strategies for** airport facilities?

Yes! Explore the following sessions in the USGBC online course catalog.

- [Beyond the Airport Terminal: A LEED Gold and Envision Platinum Case Study](#)
- [LEED and Airport Facilities Educational Resources](#)
- [Launch & Maintain Successful Electrification Programs in Parking, Transportation, and Mobility Operations](#)
- [Airports drive change resilience, decarbonization & wellness](#)
- [PEER Case Study - Campuses](#)
- [LEED for Cities and Communities: Communities Educational Resources](#)
- [Sustainable Airport Design and Operations: A LEED v4 BD+C and O+M Mega Project Case Study](#)

Who can I contact for more information about applying LEED at an airport?

For more information, [contact us](#).