



LEED Canada Credit Interpretation Request Process

For LEED Canada NC, CS, CI and EB:O&M projects

Version 3, updated: Feb 6, 2013

Preface

This document was prepared in order to provide guidance on the LEED Canada Credit Interpretation Request (CIR) process. It contains important information for how CIRs are to be prepared. Failure to comply with the guidance provided may result in CIRs being delayed.

In this document, the following short forms will be used:

- LEED Canada NC: LEED Canada for New Construction and Major Renovations
- LEED Canada CS: LEED Canada for Core & Shell Development
- LEED Canada CI: LEED Canada for Commercial Interiors
- LEED Canada EB:O&M: LEED Canada for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance

Overview

In some cases, project teams may encounter difficulties applying a LEED prerequisite or credit to a specific project. Registered projects are able to submit formal inquiries, called Credit Interpretation Requests (CIRs). The CaGBC has an established process for reviewing CIRs to ensure that rulings are fair and consistent.

DID YOU KNOW?

CIRs are clarifications, not new requirements; therefore they apply to all projects that are not yet certified. The CaGBC does not impose new requirements through the CIR process, and neither credit language nor achievement thresholds can be changed through the CIR process.

There is a charge for each CIR submitted. Note that only the main contact for a project can request a CIR for a given project. The CIR must relate to the project in question.

A database of CIRs is available to all CaGBC members, as well as the main contact for any project.

Note that US Green Building Council (USGBC) CIRs are reviewed by the CaGBC prior to finalizing all LEED Canada CIRs. However while USGBC CIRs are reviewed for reference they do not automatically apply to LEED Canada.

Similarly, CIRs for one Canadian rating system or version are not necessarily applicable to projects pursuing other Canadian rating systems or versions.

Before Submitting a CIR

Before submitting a CIR applicants must:

- Review the intent of the credit or prerequisite in question and self-evaluate whether the project meets this intent.
- Consult the appropriate LEED Reference Guide for more detailed explanation, instructions, calculations and guidance.
- Review the CIR database on the CaGBC website to see if the same inquiry has been answered previously, or if there are relevant CIRs that can help you deduce the answer. Many questions can be resolved by reviewing existing CIRs. Note that CIRs for other rating systems and CIR rulings from the USGBC are not necessarily applicable but can be referenced.

DID YOU KNOW?

Pack up the CIRs and take them on the road with you! Before you leave the office, simply go to the CIR website, log in and press "Search" with no criteria selected, and the whole database will display. Press "Export" and voila! The CIR database is available in Excel, which you can save to your laptop.

Submitting a CIR

If a CIR is needed, a new CIR may be submitted by the project's main contact using the online form.

The description of the challenge encountered by the project team should be brief but explicit; be based on prerequisite or credit information found in the Rating System and Reference Guide; and emphasize the intent of the prerequisite or credit.

The project team should offer potential solutions to the problem and solicit approval or rejection of their proposed interpretation.

Additional guidance is provided below.

- Do not state the name of the project, the credit name, or your contact information; the database automatically tracks this data.
- Do not include confidential project details; the submitted text will be posted on the CaGBC Web site.
- Do not format the CIR as a letter. Submit only the inquiry and essential background information.
- Inquiries must request guidance on just one credit or prerequisite, and generally contain one concise question, unless there are compelling technical reasons to do otherwise. It is often helpful to discuss the inquiry within the context of the credit's intent.

DID YOU KNOW?

Your project team is welcome to ask CIRs on your project during the certification review process up until the time you send your final submission. In fact, the review team may encourage you to do so in order to clarify if your alternate approach is considered acceptable by CaGBC's Technical Advisory Group.

- CIR submission text is limited to 4000 characters including spaces.
- There is no mechanism for submitting cut-sheets, plans, drawings or attachments; these documents are not necessary for a clearly stated inquiry. If staff feel such information is necessary, they will contact you to request it be provided.
- Please title your CIR with an appropriate, succinct title.
- Please provide a summary question that captures your entire issue. Refer to other posted CIRs for how the questions are summarized as “Summary Question”.
- Only provide details that are relevant to the inquiry.
- Please proofread text for clarity, readability, spelling and grammar.

Note that credits are not awarded through the CIR process. The process is designed to provide feedback to the project applicant on the likely outcome of a proposed strategy. Credit Interpretation Rulings do not guarantee credit award; the project applicant must still demonstrate and document credit achievement (including adherence to the guidance offered by the CIR) during the LEED Certification Process.

In order to use a CIR ruling, the inquiry and ruling must be submitted with the LEED project’s documentation when submitted for certification, in order to ensure effective credit review. Under LEED Canada NC 2009 and LEED Canada CS 2009, applicants may simply indicate the CIR project number in the appropriate cell of the LEED Letter Template.

Rulings are communicated to applicants by e-mail and are posted to the CIR database. Complex CIRs take longer to be ruled on, however the CaGBC always strive to provide ruling promptly. The CaGBC is introducing Project-Specific CIRs in order to provide ruling on complex issues faster.

Project-Specific CIRs

Periodically, CaGBC committees assess that a CIR ruling should be positive given the unique situation of the project in question, but struggle with the specific wording that would allow the CIR to be released publicly. In such cases, extensive research and rewrites may be required to ensure the final published CIR cannot be misinterpreted by other teams (e.g., ensuring there are no “loopholes”). It is this additional work that often takes the most time and delays applicants from receiving a prompt response.

In order to expedite the issuance of rulings, CaGBC staff and committees can now, at their own discretion, determine to classify such CIRs as “project-specific”. CIRs that are project-specific will only apply to the specific project for which the CIR was submitted. Accordingly, Project-Specific CIRs are not precedent-setting and will not automatically carry forth and apply to other projects submitted by the same or any other project team. Project-specific CIRs will not be made publicly available.

Note that the CIR process followed by applicants does not change once a CIR is determined to be project-specific.

Scope CIRs

Normally all CIRs must be requested only on a registered project and must pertain to that project. However, sometimes applicants need to ask for direction before a project is registered to appropriately determine the scope for registration; the CaGBC has responded to this need by providing a pathway for “Scope CIRs”. For example, it would be appropriate to request a Scope CIR if the project team had a large existing complex where only a portion of the space was undergoing renovation; if the project is unable to meet the Minimum Program Requirements (that provide required direction on when a space may be subdivided for certification), a Scope CIR would provide the team with the direction needed to appropriately define their space for LEED project registration. Scope CIRs can also be used where applicants are concerned the project may have trouble meeting a prerequisite and would like direction to determine if the project should register for certification.

Scope CIRs are, by and large, processed as normal CIRs are, and are published in the CaGBC’s CIR database. In order to submit a Scope CIR without a registered project to associate with it, Scope CIRs should be requested by emailing the question (summary question, with context and arguments) to certifications@cagbc.org. A staff member will contact you to have payment provided. As CIRs are considered a benefit of the registration process (even with the nominal fee), Scope CIRs for non-registered projects are charged a higher fee to more fully represent the true costs of the process. Scope CIRs are charged \$750 plus appropriate taxes.

Committee CIRs

Committee CIRs are those proposed by CaGBC’s committees to address larger market concerns where prerequisites and credits may have been more broadly misinterpreted. These CIRs are limited to key issues due to the resources they take to develop. Committee CIRs are published in the CaGBC’s CIR database.

CIR Appeal Process

Credit Interpretation Requests (CIRs) are ruled on by CaGBC’s Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs), formed of volunteer experts in LEED and in various building subject matters. Applicants may appeal CIR rulings if they believe them to be in error or if new technical information becomes available. Appeals are reviewed by the LEED Canada Steering Committee (LCSC), which sets directions and overall policy on LEED Canada products.

The original applicant must initiate the appeal within 20 business days following the receipt of the final CIR ruling. Note that posted CIR rulings may be appealed by any party, in connection to any registered project (not only by the original applicant in connection to the original project). There is no specific timeline for such appeals. Appeals of posted CIR rulings will only be considered in instances where the

applicant brings significant new information to light or addresses a significant aspect of the CIR previously not considered. If you are unsure if your proposal meets these criteria, please send your inquiry to info@cagbc.org. Posted CIR rulings that are successfully appealed will be updated in the CIR database and a new ruling date will be provided; CIRs will remain unchanged if the appeal has a negative outcome.

Applicants wishing to appeal a CIR ruling should prepare an electronic letter/email that outlines their concern with the ruling. Applicants are encouraged to provide any research or documentation that may be available to support their appeal. This documentation should be emailed to the LEED Technical Coordinator responsible for the CIR or to Customer Service (info@cagbc.org), along with a hard copy with the applicable fee.

After soliciting TAG feedback, CaGBC staff will prepare a briefing note, providing your information and summarizing TAG discussions, for the LCSC. The LCSC meets every second week. The decision of the committee will be considered final and will be provided to the applicant by the LEED Technical Coordinator.

Please note that payment of the appeal fee (currently \$750 plus applicable taxes) is required to initiate the appeal process. Appeal fees are refundable if it is shown that the original ruling body made an inappropriate decision with the information that was provided to them. Cheques should be made payable to the **Canada Green Building Council**, and sent to:

*Canada Green Building Council
47 Clarence Street, Suite 202
Ottawa ON K1N 9K1
attn: Junior LEED Technical Coordinator
Phone: 866-941-1184 x1022*