



Earth Advantage Commercial Pilot Program Description

Overview

Earth Advantage Institute (EAI) is proud to introduce the newest member of its family of sustainable building solutions, Earth Advantage® Commercial. The commercial program is a third-party certification program that upon completion of the pilot will be poised to become a new industry leading benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance small commercial buildings. In developing the program, EAI has partnered with the Energy Trust of Oregon and the New Buildings Institute, whose efforts focused on ensuring predictable energy savings and cost-effectiveness of energy requirements. EAI will be running a pilot of the program through 2010.

The main goals of Earth Advantage Commercial are to:

- Create a green building rating system tailored to accommodate the specific attributes of small commercial projects.
- Provide a tool kit comprised of prescriptive measures that will maximize cost effectiveness and environmental benefit.
- Minimize the soft costs of certification and fees associated with multiple consultants, energy modeling, commissioning, and measurement and verification.
- Create more well-rounded projects via the implementation of a comprehensive suite of measures.
- Ensure predictable and measurable benefits including energy savings, reduced carbon footprint and water savings.
- Demonstrate benefits of green building in a community currently underserved by existing green rating systems.
- Recognize and reward environmental leadership at the

small commercial scale.

- Provide a medium for whole-building energy efficiency for small buildings incentivized by the Energy Trust of Oregon.

The Earth Advantage Commercial program was established with the vision of bringing an affordable, holistic, alternative green rating system to the market, enabling small commercial buildings to obtain a legitimized third-party certification. While buildings under 50,000 square feet make up approximately 95% of commercial buildings in the United States (Energy Information Administration, 2003), they tend to be excluded from uptake of third-party certified green building rating systems because of the steep soft costs and lack of financial resilience over long payback periods.

The new Earth Advantage Commercial program was created on the heels of a previous certification program that certified several prominent buildings in the 1990s and early 2000s. In late 2008, Earth Advantage began updating the Earth Advantage Commercial system to more effectively target the underserved small commercial building community. The process of program development included the engagement of stakeholders from multiple sectors in a series of progressively detailed stakeholder workshops. It also included engaging a team of experts in various relevant fields to conduct systems reviews and assist in design of measurement and documentation requirements. This vision and process established the importance of specific



measures and helped to create a standard based on best practices and “state-of-the-shelf” availability for small commercial projects.

Program Elements

The Earth Advantage Commercial program recognizes performance in five key areas; Energy (energy category developed in conjunction with the Energy Trust of Oregon and the New Buildings Institute), Water, Health, Land and Materials. The required measures in each of these categories are aimed at specific target areas under which each category delivers its primary benefits and function. To ensure an adequate level of flexibility there is a short menu of additional measures to pick from that may help in fulfilling the requirements of certification. By achieving a set number of requirements in all the categories, and all the target areas, project teams will create a balanced, well-rounded sustainable and energy efficient project.

The Earth Advantage Commercial program provides three levels of certification: Silver, Gold and Platinum. At the Silver level, a customer who may not be familiar with green building practices would be able to navigate the requirements with minimal technical assistance. At the Gold and Platinum levels of certification, the program requirements not only become more rigorous but also increase the customer’s level of responsibility in the design, monitoring, and verification of environmental benefits exhibited by their project.

Beyond reduced soft costs in project certification, incentives may be available at the different levels of certification. Participants in the program may be eligible for incentives from the

Energy Trust of Oregon. EAI is working with other incentive and tax credit sources to make these resources available to program participants, thereby increasing the value of certification and reducing a developer’s capital obligations.

The Earth Advantage Commercial program is currently soliciting pilot projects until the end of the year. The full program-rollout will occur in late 2010.

Notes:

Energy Information Administration, 2003 Commercial Buildings Energy Consumption Survey (CEBCS)—Overview of Commercial Buildings Characteristics, Information retrieved from (<http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cbecs/cbecs2003/introduction.html>)