

# Hotel sustainability certifications

**This factsheet explores the benefits of hotel sustainability certification, and gives an overview of the different types with advice on how to get started with the certification process**

## Benefits of certification

All buildings, such as hotels, can have a major impact on the environment throughout their lifecycle. Energy, water and other natural resources (such as timber, cotton and food) are required, and waste is produced during the construction and use of a building.

With many countries and companies pledging to achieve net zero carbon emissions, sustainable construction and management of buildings will play an important role in achieving these goals. Following a certification process will help hotel properties to identify and implement ways to improve their impact across a range of sustainability criteria.

Achieving an environmental certification may help a hotel to:

- Independently assess and validate its impact
- Identify ways to improve internal management processes
- Determine more sustainable technologies and practices which can improve efficiency and reduce operating costs
- Demonstrate compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements
- Satisfy corporate customers who are increasingly requesting information about their suppliers' social and environmental initiatives
- Increase sales by appealing to environmentally conscious customers
- Increase engagement of employees who care about environmental and social issues
- Futureproof properties to maintain long-term building value



## Case study

ITC Hotels builds sustainable practices into all of their new hotels at the design stage and all existing older hotel properties are retrofitted with the requisite requirements to accomplish LEED Platinum Certification. ITC Hotels is among the largest hotel chains in the world with all its Luxury hotels certified as LEED Platinum.

Further demonstrating leadership, ITC Windsor is the first hotel in the world to achieve "LEED Zero Carbon Certification" which shall be followed by other hotels of the chain.

# How to get started

## 1. Leadership authorisation

The leadership team should decide what type of certification they want to achieve. This will help to identify the most appropriate certification to consider.

If the team is planning a new opening/new build hotel it is worth considering a building certification from the outset, incorporating this into the planning process to avoid additional costs of retrofitting and making changes at a later stage.

## 2. Set up a project team

Set up a project team of relevant people to research, plan and implement the process. Achieving building certifications requires participation from development teams, whereas operational certifications require participation from all hotel departments.

## 3. Make an action plan

Plans should include:

- Researching popular certifications within your country and industry, especially those which are required to do business with particular organisations (e.g. governments).
- Reviewing appropriateness for your hotel and drawing up a comparison.
- Evaluating the pros/cons with your project team.
- Presenting your recommended certification and implementation plan to your leadership team.
- Building the cost of certification into your budget. Consider teaming up with other properties in your company or neighbourhood to potentially reduce auditing costs. Certification bodies may reduce charges if they can audit multiple hotels at the same time.
- Reviewing necessary actions to achieve certification and agree a plan for any required changes and upgrades.

## 4. Communicate your certification

Once you have achieved your certification, let your employees, guests, corporate clients and business partners know so you can receive the reputational benefits.



# Types of certification

There are two different types of certifications that are relevant to hotels:

1. **Environmental certifications for the building itself**, with different versions for new builds versus existing buildings. Examples include LEED and BREEAM.
2. **Environmental certifications for how a hotel is operated**. Examples include Green Key, Green Globe, ISO 14001 and EU Ecolabel.

Some of the most popular certification schemes for hotels are listed below.

## Recognised certifications

This is a selection of some of the different certifications available. Hotels should select the system that best meets their intended outcomes.

### Popular and reputable operational certifications

- **Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)** Criteria. Designed to take sustainable tourism guidelines and standards from around the world into account, the GSTC criteria focus on sustainable management, socioeconomic impacts, cultural impacts and environmental impacts.

They also recognise various hotel certification schemes around the world which are equivalent to GSTC certification. The full list can be found on their [website](#).

- **Earth Check** uses internationally recognized criteria to report on management performance covering a wide range of areas including environment, risk and quality management.
- **Green Globe** includes 44 core criteria focused on areas such as sustainable management, social/economic, cultural heritage and the environment.
- **Green Key** represents a commitment by businesses that their premises adhere to the environmental responsibility and sustainable operation criteria set by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE)
- **Travelife Accommodation Sustainability** criteria cover environmental, social and economic business impacts
- **EU Ecolabel or EU Flower** is awarded to products and services that have a lower environmental impact than comparable products and services.

### Popular and reputable building certifications

- **LEED** assesses against areas such as energy and water efficiency, materials used, indoor air quality and awareness and education.
- **BREEAM** has nine criteria including energy, health and wellbeing, ecology and waste.
- **EDGE** certifies buildings based on their on-site energy savings and includes a certification for zero carbon.

### Other standards

The **International Organization for Standardization** (ISO) provides many internationally agreed standards for different areas of business management. ISO does not perform certification; this can be carried out on some of their standards by a third-party certification body by auditing the business's practices against the standard. The main environmentally-focused certification standards are ISO 14,001 (environmental management) and ISO 50,001 (energy management).



# Communications

Letting your customers, employees and partners know that your hotel has achieved an environmental certification is almost as important as taking action.

Check with your certification provider if they have any guidance or tools that can help you best communicate with your guests (remember that they may have rules about how you can use their logo).

Your communications should include what you are doing, what your achievements have been and how you are addressing some of the bigger, longer-term issues. A good start is to map your efforts against the relevant [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#). There may not always be a specific goal for the exact issue you are addressing, but the goals most related to design, construction and operation of buildings are SDG 6, 9, 11, 12 and 13.



## Case studies

### Radisson Hotel Group

Radisson Hotel Group aims to have all of its hotels certified to an eco-label within a year of their opening. The Radisson Blu Hotel Faridabad in India earned its LEED Gold status by implementing a number of additional sustainable practices. These include two rainwater harvesting pits and a heat-island roof top with solar panels that can generate an estimated 70,000 Kwh/ year.

The hotel was designed with LED lighting, solar panels, solar lighting, and efficient HVAC systems that offer at least a 40% energy savings over traditional systems. Additionally, the hotel has reduced water waste by 43% thanks to low flow toilets and the utilisation of treated grey water from a nearby sewage treatment plant.

### Hyatt

Hyatt Regency Amsterdam is BREEAM Excellent Certified. With high-quality insulation systems, energy-efficient LED lighting, a sophisticated energy management system, partially overgrown facade for climate compensation and many other initiatives, this hotel sets an example of energy efficiency and sustainability in Amsterdam.

### Scandic

All of Scandic's hotels must be certified with the Nordic Swan Ecolabel in Nordic countries, the EU ECOLABEL in Poland and Green Globe in Germany. These all demonstrate a hotel is actively working towards reducing the impact of its environmental operations. Scandic requires hotels it takes over to be certified within the first year.



## About Sustainable Hospitality Alliance

Sustainable Hospitality Alliance brings together engaged hospitality companies and uses the collective power of the industry to address key challenges affecting our planet and its people.

[info@sustainablehospitalityalliance.org](mailto:info@sustainablehospitalityalliance.org)

[www.sustainablehospitalityalliance.org](http://www.sustainablehospitalityalliance.org)

Sustainable Hospitality Alliance is a registered charity in England and Wales (1188731). Company limited by guarantee (12373950).

*Responsible hospitality for a better world*