

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Interagency Sustainability Working Group

Past Accomplishments, Current Priorities, and New Opportunities

February 2009

The Interagency Sustainability Working Group (ISWG) is the coordinating body for sustainability of the built environment in the Federal sector. The ISWG's mission is to lead the Federal government's implementation and integration of sustainable building laws, regulations, presidential directives, and other Federal policies. This mission is in line with Executive Order 13423, which charged the ISWG to:

- serve as a forum for information exchange and promote agency implementation of goals for high performance and sustainable building;
- develop policy and reporting guidance that fosters the widespread adoption of sustainable design and operations in the Federal sector; and
- develop technical guidance and tools to support implementation of agency sustainability policies for Federally owned, operated, and leased buildings.

Key accomplishments of the ISWG since its formation in 2001 include:

- coordinating and consolidating agency policies and best practices for implementing sustainable design and construction practices;
- developing and implementing the Memorandum of Understanding on Federal Leadership in High Performance and Sustainable Buildings (2006);
- providing recommendations and assisting in the issuance of the High Performance and Sustainable Building Guidance (2008);
- developing the High Performance and Sustainable Building technical guidance and other tools and resources.

One measure of progress is the number of buildings and square footage certified under the USGBC's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system. As of December 2008, there were 123 certified Federal LEED buildings, totaling about 14 million square feet, and located in 19 different Federal agencies. The number of Federal LEED certified projects has steadily increased every year, while Federal construction funding has remained relatively stable. Moreover, federal LEED buildings represent over 5 percent of all LEED certified buildings, whereas federal buildings in total make up about 1.5 percent of all buildings in the U.S. All of this indicates that the federal government is helping lead the way by investing in its buildings in a smarter, more environmentally friendly manner. In recognition of its accomplishments, the ISWG received a 2007 White House Closing the Circle Award for Leadership in Environmental Stewardship.

While the ISWG has been instrumental in establishing the framework for federal sustainability, much work still remains to scale up sustainable initiatives across the government and make design and operation of sustainable buildings the standard practice. The opportunities are tremendous, as the federal government currently operates about 500,000 buildings, equaling over 3 billion square feet, and 630,000 vehicles worldwide. To facilitate this scaling up, the ISWG has identified the following priorities for 2009 and beyond, as well as key areas of work:

1. Make Sustainability the Standard Practice

- Support agencies in meeting the requirements set forth in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, especially with regard to incorporating sustainability into projects.
- Take advantage of green building incentives to the greatest extent practical.
- More closely align sustainability goals with budget examination.
- Support innovation in sustainability and communicate its results.
- Reduce the budgeting and planning gap between design & delivery and operations & maintenance.

2. Transform the Existing Built Environment by Integrating Sustainability into Campus and Portfolio Management

- Explore development of a web-based sustainable building assessment tool for use by Federal agencies to take advantage of common needs across the agencies.
- Continue to support federal sustainability goals with guidance and tools that enable agencies to maximize their limited resources to most effectively incorporate sustainability.
- Emphasize training for facilities management staff that cultivates the core competences necessary to effectively operate increasingly complex building systems.
- Establish and exchange best practices for incorporating sustainability into real property reporting and environmental management systems.
- Eliminate barriers to incorporating sustainable design into historic buildings, medical facilities, and other challenging building types.

3. Measure and Verify Building Performance

- Compile performance measurement data from multiple agency assessments to examine trends of larger data set of sustainably designed buildings.
- Explore development of a “dashboard” for whole building performance that provides a clear assessment of performance for a building, campus, or portfolio of buildings.
- Communicate the findings of the performance measurement studies to key stakeholder groups, especially to inform the budgeting and planning cycles.

4. Institutionalize Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Management and Abatement

- Develop guidance and tools for reducing fossil-fuel based energy consumption in new construction (from Section 433 of the Energy Independence and Security Act).
- Provide recommendations for establishing a Federal GHG measurement protocol.
- Establish guidance for developing agency-level GHG management plans that aligns with any Federal requirements and/or roadmap for Federal-wide GHG reductions.
- Provide GHG management tools, resources, and training to Federal agencies as necessary, such as training on completing agency- and site-wide emissions inventories, reporting agency-level GHG emissions, and developing and implementing GHG management plans.