

Which Certification is Right for Your Hotel?



What criteria should a hotelier evaluate when choosing an eco certification?

Top 12 Criteria:

1. **Relevance to Business Needs:** Ensure the certification aligns with the specific eco-friendly initiatives and goals the hotel wishes to achieve.
2. **Reputation and Recognition:** Some certifications are more widely recognized and respected than others. A well-known certification can attract more eco-conscious guests.
3. **Geographical Relevance:** Some certifications may be more suited to certain regions or countries. It's essential to ensure the chosen certification is relevant to the hotel's location.
4. **Scope and Rigor:** Understand the breadth and depth of the certification. Some might cover only specific aspects (like energy consumption), while others might be comprehensive (covering water usage, waste management, partnerships, etc.)
5. **Transparency:** Ensure the certification body has a transparent evaluation process and that the criteria are publicly available. This transparency can build trust with guests.
6. **Third-Party Verification:** Certifications that require third-party verification or audits tend to be more credible because of the unbiased review of the hotel's practices.
7. **Support and Resources:** Some certifying bodies offer training, marketing support, or other resources. This assistance can help in implementing eco-practices and promoting the hotel's green credentials.
8. **Guest Perception:** How do potential guests view the certification? If your target audience highly values certain certifications, it might be worth prioritizing those.



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9. **Potential Benefits:** Beyond environmental impact, consider other benefits like potential cost savings from energy or water conservation, marketing advantages, or eligibility for grants and incentives.

10. **Scalability:** If the hotelier owns or manages multiple properties, it's crucial to understand if the certification can scale across all of them or if it's suited to individual properties.

11. **Community and Stakeholder Engagement:** Some certifications emphasize community involvement and stakeholder engagement. If this is a priority for the hotel, consider certifications that value these aspects.

12. **Alignment with Other Certifications:** If the hotel already holds or is considering other certifications, look at certifications that align and emphasize the benefits of each.



Which certification serves which purpose?

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, and Earthcheck

Let's take a look at the top building certifications:



Globally recognized, LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is a green building rating system that rewards efficient and cost-saving green initiatives within buildings and construction. The newest version, LEED v5, emphasizes more stringent standards for energy efficiency, water conservation, and materials usage. V5 also now includes an operational element that focuses on improving the performance of existing buildings by addressing ongoing operations, maintenance, and upgrades.



BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) is an assessment system that uses scientifically based sustainability metrics to evaluate the environmental performance of buildings. It assesses various aspects of development, including energy and water use, health and wellbeing, pollution, transport, materials, waste, ecology, and management processes to give buildings a rating of 'Pass', 'Good', 'Very Good', 'Excellent', or 'Outstanding'



EDGE (Excellence in Design for Greater Efficiencies) was created by the International Finance Corporation as a certification system that focuses on promoting resource-efficient and sustainable building designs for residential and commercial projects in emerging markets. EDGE allows you to choose green building strategies and calculate their financial and environmental impacts. EDGE also allows you to compare a standard building to yours and considers climate and micro climate.

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Let's look at operational certifications:



The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) is a globally recognized organization that establishes the standard for sustainable travel and tourism, known as the GSTC Criteria. Certifications approved by the GSTC hold the highest standards. All of the certifications mentioned in this guide have received GSTC approval.



EarthCheck provides a comprehensive suite of tools and programs to help businesses and destinations measure, manage, and improve their environmental and social performance. They use science based metrics and performance indicators and are present in over 70 countries.



Green Key Global is a self-assessment for hotels to take. Each question is assigned a value and based on the percentage a hotel gets they can achieve anywhere from 1 to 5 Green Keys, with 5 keys being the most sustainable. The American Hotel and Lodging Association has recently partnered with Green Key Global to operate the organization in Canada and the United States.



Green Key was founded in Denmark by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). Created for the tourism industry, Green Key prides itself on its transparency, auditing, and third-party verification system on criteria including energy efficiency, water conservation, waste management, and guest education.



Green Globe provides a comprehensive framework, ratings, and certifications to buildings in the hospitality industry that foster Green Globes' triple bottom line: "People, their place, and prosperity". Once completed, buildings will receive a rating from one to four, and unlike other certifications, there are no minimum criteria needed in order to begin the process. A Green Globe certification signifies a dedication to reducing the environmental impact of tourism operations while enhancing the well-being of local communities

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TRUE (Total Resource Use and Efficiency) is a zero waste certification program using a whole systems approach to tackle the issue of waste and encourage sustainable resource management. It provides a rigorous framework for businesses and facilities to achieve significant reductions in waste generation and promote responsible resource use, encouraging a more circular economy. Note: LEED and TRUE integrate well together.



Certified B Corporation, or B Corp, is a certification for businesses that show that they are committed to and meet rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency. Businesses who are trying to achieve this certification must undergo an assessment and certification process that ensures they meet these standards.



WELL differs from other green certifications due to its focus on people's health and wellness through the performance of the building. It focuses on aspects such as air quality, water quality, lighting, nutrition, fitness, and comfort to create healthier and more productive indoor environments. WELL certification demonstrates an organization's commitment to occupant health and safety as well as a more sustainable built environment.