



## **4 CSR 240-22.050\_APPENDIX H**

# **EVALUATION OF AMERENUE'S LEED<sup>TM</sup> INCENTIVE GRANT PROGRAM**

*Prepared for*

**AMERENUE**

*Prepared by*

**OPINION DYNAMICS CORPORATION**

1030 Massachusetts Avenue

Cambridge, MA 02138

(617) 492-1400

[www.opiniondynamics.com](http://www.opiniondynamics.com)

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## Executive Summary

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED™) Incentive Program is a collaboration between AmerenUE and the U.S. Green Building Council-St. Louis Regional Chapter (USGBC-STL). The main objective of this program is to encourage the construction of LEED™ certified green buildings in the St. Louis region. The program has two main components: (1) training sessions to educate those in the building industry – including architects, engineers, contractors, facility managers, interior designers, furnishing product manufacturers, and landscape architects – about the LEED™ Green Building Rating System® and the benefits of green building; and (2) incentive grants to project owners or developers of new construction and major renovations or remodeling projects that follow the LEED™ Green Building Rating System®. (See Section II for a full program description.)

Based on the findings from our process evaluation, program accomplishments to-date include:

- Five workshops conducted or scheduled, with attendance exceeding goal
- 28 workshop participants supported with AmerenUE funds
- Eighteen start-up grants awarded, including six applications for Gold-level certification and one application for a Platinum-level certification
- New USGBC-STL chapter members as result of participating in trainings and increased awareness about green building and energy efficiency among building professionals

These findings are described in Section III.

The participation goal for the first funding period was five workshops with 40 participants each, and five incentive grant awards.<sup>1</sup> Both of these goals were exceeded during the first funding period. The first year of the program appears to have been successful as all participation goals will be met. Moreover, participants generally expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the application process, information and support that they received from USGBC-STL.

For the remainder of this first round of funding, we recommend the following:

- Examine impacts, including non-energy benefits (NEBs) to demonstrate the effectiveness of this program.
- Ensure program tracking of baseline assumptions, soft costs, and additional details to assist with future impact evaluation efforts that AmerenUE or the Collaborative may wish to conduct.

Only one round of funding has been provided for this project to-date; however, if additional rounds of funding are conducted, AmerenUE and the Collaborative should consider the following recommendations:

- Define program goals for future funding

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<sup>1</sup> Notably, the first funding period will not be complete until the projects are completed.

- Seek applicants prior to project design phase
- Set more stringent hurdles for applicants and work to increase the level of energy efficiency by being more selective in the award of future funds
- Better target promotional efforts to expand the reach of the program beyond those who would have pursued LEED certification anyway
- Develop a forum for feedback to assist with marketing and program redesign
- Document soft costs of LEED projects and consider providing additional support depending on findings
- Re-examine allocation of funds to future trainings as well as the goals of these trainings to ensure that AmerenUE support is used where it is needed most. Work to improve trainings and consider increasing scholarship funding.

Respondent suggestions to motivate future participants include additional financial incentives, education, and information. Details for all recommendations can be found in Section V.

## **I. Introduction and Methodology**

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED™) Incentive Program is a collaboration between AmerenUE and the U.S. Green Building Council-St. Louis Regional Chapter (USGBC-STL). The main objective of the program is to encourage the construction of LEED™ certified green buildings in the St. Louis region. The program was designed with two main components: (1) training sessions to educate those in the building industry – including architects, engineers, contractors, facility managers, interior designers, furnishing product manufacturers, and landscape architects – about the LEED™ Green Building Rating System® and the benefits of green building; and (2) incentive grants to project owners or developers of new construction and major renovations or remodeling projects that follow the LEED™ Green Building Rating System®.

The program was funded for only a single funding cycle, and to-date has proceeded through Phase 1, the distribution of start-up funds to the grant recipients. Phase 2, disbursement of the balance of funds upon individual projects achieving their stated LEED level of certification will occur throughout the next two years as projects complete the construction and LEED certification process. As such, no impact evaluation of this phase was required.

This report provides a process evaluation of the LEED Program, led by Opinion Dynamics Corp. This process evaluation is based on (1) our review of program materials, including a 2-page program description, program overviews on Ameren's and USGBC-STL's websites, an application form, and a USGBC-STL proposal letter addressed to Ameren Services; (2) in-depth interviews with the program administrator of USGBC-STL and the AmerenUE contact; (3) a review of the training participant databases; (4) a review of the data collected through the post-training follow-up survey conducted by USGBC-STL; and (5) telephone interviews with 16 of the 18 incentive award recipients.

## II. Program Description

The LEED™ Incentive Grant Program was designed to accelerate green building practices, energy conservation, and environmental performance. The LEED™ Green Building Rating System® is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green buildings. LEED promotes a whole-building approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in five key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials & resources, indoor environmental quality and innovation & design process ([www.usgbc.org/LEED/](http://www.usgbc.org/LEED/)). While LEED certifications have been available since the 1990s, the AmerenUE/USGBC-STL LEED partnership began in late 2004.

In October, 2004, under the direction of the State of Missouri Energy Efficiency Collaborative Team, AmerenUE and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources conducted a survey to discover the types of incentives that would most effectively support LEED certification of building projects in the St. Louis region. The AmerenUE/USGBC-STL LEED™ Incentive Grant Program was designed in October 2005, as a result of the survey findings and filed with the State of Missouri Public Service Commission in April of 2006. The program officially launched June 1, 2006 with applications due to the USGBC-STL by December 31. The program was targeted towards commercial and institutional projects in the AmerenUE service territory. Residential home projects were not eligible for participation.

The program consists of two main components: training and incentive grants, which are described in more detail below.

**Training:** The AmerenUE LEED program included the support of five training modules, organized by USGBC-STL. These trainings were conducted in addition to other LEED training, which USGBC-STL offers on a regular basis. The topics of the five training sessions were:

- LEED for General Contractors & Construction Managers Training
- Understanding LEED Project Costs & Returns
- Using LEED-NC on School Projects (K-12) Training
- Using LEED-NC on Health Care Projects
- Energy Modeling for LEED-NC Projects Workshop

LEED training modules are targeted towards a wide range of building industry professionals, including architects, engineers, contractors, facility managers, interior designers, furnishing product manufacturers, and landscape architects. The participation goal for the five training modules was at least 40 participants per module.

**Incentive Grants:** The incentive grant component of the program will provide up to \$30,000 for obtaining a LEED certification. LEED™ incentive grants cannot be applied to construction costs; they have to be used for “soft” costs, such as LEED™ certification fees and documentation, professional services, and commissioning. To qualify for an incentive grant, applicants were required to submit a completed application form, verification of LEED™

registration, a LEED™ checklist of preliminary goals, and a signed Letter of Agreement.<sup>2</sup> Incentive grants could be submitted for four types of projects:

- New Commercial Construction & Major Renovations (LEED-NC)
- Existing Buildings Operations and Maintenance (LEED-EB)
- Commercial interiors (LEED-CI)
- Core and shell (LEED-CS)

For Phase 1, the start-up phase, the program was designed to pay \$5,000 to the successful applicants within 45 days of grant award. The balance of funds, Phase 2, will be paid within 45 days of award of LEED™ certification. The total grant award depends on the level of certification, which is determined by the number of points the project receives under the LEED™ Green Building Rating System®. Points are awarded in five key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, indoor environmental quality and innovation & design process. In each category, the project must meet a minimum number of points. In an effort to increase the energy efficiency component of the applicants' projects, AmerenUE required projects to exceed the LEED prerequisite for energy efficiency. The total grant award, including the \$5,000 start-up funding, for the four LEED™ certification levels are:

- LEED™ Certified: \$15,000
- LEED™ Silver: \$20,000
- LEED™ Gold: \$25,000
- LEED™ Platinum: \$30,000

The Energy Efficiency Collaborative initially anticipated budgeted funds to award incentive grants to five green building projects. The original program budget for the first funding period was \$150,000, including \$25,000 for the five training modules, up to \$120,000 for five incentive grant awards, and up to \$5,000 for program administration.

On Application close date, December 31, 2006, USGBC-STL received a total of 18 grant applications. The response was far greater than expected at the time the program was designed. AmerenUE program management totaled the amount of grant funding that would be needed to award all eighteen grants and went back to the State of Missouri Energy Efficiency Collaborative with a request for additional funding to award all 18 grants. The Collaborative was in immediate agreement that this response was exceptional and agreed to fund the additional moneys necessary to award the grants.

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<sup>2</sup> The letter of agreement commits grantees to (1) achieving LEED™ certification; (2) agreeing to make their facilities available for green building tours; (3) providing proof of achieving energy cost reductions of 15% for new buildings and 5% for existing buildings compared to ASHRAE/IESNA Standard 90.1-1999 ("LEED EA credit 1.1"); (4) providing a schedule of how the grant funds will be used; and (5) providing proof of LEED™ certification to receive full grant funds. **Please Note:** MOU between USGBC-STL and projects requires projects to achieve at least two points under Optimize Energy Performance in the Energy and Atmosphere category of LEED NC 2.2, LEED CS, LEED CI 2.0 and LEED EB 2.0. The percentage of energy cost reduction differs between LEED NC v 2.2 and v 2.1 and Letter of Agreement was based on LEED NC v 2.1.

As a result, in January, 2007 the budget for grant awards was increased from \$120,000 to \$380,000 for the 18 projects, for a total program budget of \$410,000. In addition, USGBC-STL requested an increase in the program administration budget to account for the larger number of projects to be tracked. Between June 2006 and early 2007, total spending has totaled \$108,530. Of this \$90,000, or 83% has gone towards the initial grants (\$5,000 each for 18 projects).

**Table 1: LEED Program Budget/Costs**

<b>Budget Item</b>	<b>Budget</b>
Training <sup>a</sup>	\$25,000
Initial Incentive Grants	\$90,000 (actual costs)
Balance of Incentive Grants to be Paid	\$290,000 (estimated balance given awards anticipated to be applied for)
Program Administration	\$5,000 budgeted (to be increased)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$410,000</b>

a. The training budget consists of \$10,000 to schedule, market, and coordinate five training modules; \$5,000 in scholarships and/or registration subsidies; and \$10,000 for follow up contact with attendees.

USGBC-STL administers the program and is responsible for program implementation, marketing and promotion, and operation. Program promotion is primarily targeted to USGBC-STL members and other professional organizations that have an interest in the building industry or that work in the building industry. USGBC-STL's website, newsletter, and e-mails are the main channels of promotion materials. Materials available on USGBC-STL's website include one-page electronic flyers about the various AmerenUE-sponsored training modules and a March 2007 press-release about the presentation of initial grant awards to the 18 program participants. According to the USGBC-STL program administrator, with more time and money, program promotion could be much more targeted, and participation in at least the training modules could be increased significantly. USGBC-STL also provides quarterly updates on the trainings, including promotional activities and attendance, to the collaborative.<sup>3</sup>

The National USGBC develops the trainings, provides the instructors, and conducts follow-up interviews with training attendees. The program provided funding for five training modules, the incentive grant awards, and USGBC-STL program administration. AmerenUE also promoted the program through its Ameren.com website and through its Key Account Executives, who send out information to AmerenUE's major commercial customers.

Notably, AmerenUE oversees in the program, in partnership with the USGBC-STL on behalf of the State of Missouri Energy Efficiency Collaborative. AmerenUE efforts are provided in-kind and are not documented in the program funding.

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<sup>3</sup> The collaborative consists of AmerenUE, the Office of Public Counsel, the Missouri Public Service Commission Staff, and the Department of Natural Resources' Energy Center



### **III. Program Accomplishments**

The program has just completed Phase 1. As of May 2007, program accomplishments included:

- Five workshops conducted or scheduled, with attendance exceeding goal of 40 participants per training
- 28 workshop participants supported with AmerenUE scholarship funds
- Eighteen start-up grants awarded, including six Gold-level certifications and one Platinum-level certification
- New USGBC-STL chapter members as result of participating in trainings and increased awareness about green building and energy efficiency among building professionals

These accomplishments are described further below.

#### **Five Workshops Conducted or Scheduled, with Attendance Exceeding Goal**

As of May 2007, four of the five workshops had been conducted, with the last one scheduled for June 2007. The USGBC-STL sees the goals of the trainings as educating players in the building industry about “the LEED Green Building rating system, about Green Building in general, and also about energy efficiency and what they can do in the design and the construction and operation of their buildings to increase their energy efficiency and reduce their impact on the environment using LEED.” The trainings are designed to encourage green building and to help market actors bid on LEED projects by helping them better understand LEED. Workshop attendance has exceeded the target of 40 participants per event. According to the program training databases, attendance at the first three workshops averaged 48 people per training. The high level of participation is an indication of interest in the subject, awareness of the importance of green building and energy efficiency among building professionals as well as an indication that the marketing and promotion efforts for the program were successful. AmerenUE funds appear to have pushed the USGBC-STL to conduct trainings that it wanted to conduct, but would not have done without the additional funds.

#### **28 Workshop Participants Supported With AmerenUE Funds**

The USGBC-STL received and disbursed \$5,000 for scholarships or discounts to the workshops to attract attendees who may not otherwise have been able to afford to attend. Most scholarship funds were distributed to students and school district & municipal employees whose budgets were not able to support the LEED course tuition. In total, 28 workshop participants were supported with AmerenUE funds.

#### **Eighteen Start-Up Grants Awarded, including Six Applications for Gold-level Certifications and One Application for a Platinum-level Certification**

Participation in the incentive component of the program has also exceeded expectations. As indicated above, AmerenUE initially intended to award five incentive grants. However, when 18 eligible applications were received, AmerenUE asked to fund all of them. On March 14, 2007, AmerenUE and USGBC-STL officially presented \$90,000 in start-up grants to the 18 project owners/developers. Due to the early stage in the program, no LEED™ certifications have been obtained, and no Phase 2 funds have been disbursed. Of those who have applied, four are

seeking “Certified” status, seven are seeking “Silver” status, six are seeking “Gold” status, and one is seeking “Platinum” status.

**Table 2: Certification Levels of Projects**

<b>Certification Level</b>	<b>Number of Projects</b>
Platinum	1
Gold	6
Silver	7
Certified	4
TOTAL	18

The 18 projects represent a good mix of building types. Five mixed-use buildings, three schools, three non-profit or institutional buildings, three commercial spaces, two public recreation centers, and two residential buildings comprise the grant awarded projects.

### **New USGBC-STL chapter members as result of participating in trainings**

Based on our in-depth interview with the USGBC-STL program administrator, the funding from AmerenUE led to new USGBC-STL chapter members as result of participating in trainings and increased awareness about green building and energy efficiency among building professionals.

#### **IV. Impacts and Cost Effectiveness**

Because the program is still in only the second phase of the process – i.e., start-up funds have been disbursed but no LEED™ certifications have been achieved – this program evaluation does not include a review of program impacts or a cost-effectiveness analysis.

## V. Process Findings and Recommendations

The participation goals for the first funding period were five workshops with 40 participants each and five incentive grant awards. Both of these goals were exceeded during the initial start-up phase. Overall, the first year of the program appears to have been successful as all participation goals will be met. Participants generally expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the application process and the information and support they received from USGBC-STL, based on our in-depth interviews.

According to program participants, benefits of the program (apart from the incentive money) include: social/environmental benefits (“it’s the right thing to do”); marketing opportunities; higher levels of publicity/mainstream media attention; energy efficiency; and access to guidance/resources/new ideas.

Approximately half of the participants learned about the program directly from the USGBC-STL.<sup>4</sup> All respondents found the USGBC-STL program administrator to be responsive and helpful and none expressed any difficulties with the initial application form. Because it is early in the process, only one respondent indicated having completed any of the LEED Incentive Award documentation (credits only), but this respondent did not have any problems with it; moreover, no respondents foresee any problems with attaining certification although most indicated planning on using outside resources to do their energy modeling.

Based on our process evaluation findings, for the remainder of this first round of funding, we recommend the following:

➤ **Examine impacts, including non-energy benefits to demonstrate effectiveness**

While it is likely that these projects will result in energy savings, AmerenUE and the Collaborative should examine the impacts from these 18 projects, including the non-energy benefits (NEBs) that arise from the LEED certification process, such as brighter lighting and improved work environments.

➤ **Ensure program tracking of baseline assumptions, soft costs, and additional details to assist with future impact evaluation efforts that AmerenUE or the Collaborative may wish to conduct**

Given the early stage of this program, it is unclear what program tracking will occur. As the 18 approved projects go forward, formal tracking of their status by the USGBC-STL would be useful. The USGBC-STL should track all information provided in the application forms (e.g., all project decisionmakers and contacts, budget, square footage, etc.), as well as indicate all information that is collected in hardcopy. AmerenUE should also consider tracking baseline assumptions if future programs require the calculation of energy savings, as well as the specific soft costs for these projects (as discussed below). Anecdotally, about half of the interviewees who responded to this question had a notion of their likely energy savings (ranging from 15% to 50%); the other half did not know.

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<sup>4</sup> Three other participants found out through a contractor, architect, or consultant; and one through the internet.

While only one round of funding has been provided for this project to-date, our findings support AmerenUE and the Collaborative offering another round of grant funding in conjunction with the USGBC St. Louis Regional Chapter.

AmerenUE and the Collaborative should continue to partner with the USGBC-STL since this partnership appears to be successful while providing funding for administrative support that is commensurate with the expected level of effort. To date, the partnership with the USGBC-STL has been successful, but the AmerenUE funding reflected a goal of five trainings and five projects. Since additional projects have been selected, additional administrative support is expected. The USGBC-STL and AmerenUE are currently working with the State of Missouri Energy Efficiency Collaborative to increase the amount of AmerenUE support for USGBC-STL administration of this program, while still leveraging existing program funding from the USGBC-STL's other sources. Additional funds by AmerenUE would be expected given the larger number of AmerenUE-supported applicants.

If additional rounds of funding are conducted, recommendations to refine these future programs include:

➤ **Define program goals for future funding**

The current program materials do not provide a precise definition of program goals for future AmerenUE funding periods. The two-page program summary states that this program seeks to “encourage green building practices by funding the LEED™ Incentive Program.” Other descriptions by AmerenUE indicate that the grants will be awarded “to encourage the construction of green buildings that will serve as examples for future projects to emulate.” In this early stage of the program, these general goals appear to be being met. As stated above, the participation goal for the first funding period was five workshops with 40 participants each and five incentive grant awards. Both of these goals were exceeded during the first funding period. Going forward, however, AmerenUE should more specifically define the goals for any subsequent funding. For example, it is not clear if participation in trainings is a goal in itself or simply a means to increasing the number of certifications. If the latter is the case, the effect of training attendance on certification grant applications should be examined. We also suggest including more specific impact goals, such as energy savings attributable to the program.

➤ **Seek applicants prior to project design phase**

Most respondents indicated that they made only minor changes to their plans to meet LEED requirements. While no formal impact analysis was required for this program, our primary research did reveal that this first phase of funding went primarily to early adopters who would have completed the projects anyway. Interviews with 11 grant awardees (representing 16 of the 18 projects) indicated that 10 of the 16 projects would have been done to the same standard without the incentive (as might be expected with the start up of any new program). Notably, however, participants have not applied for the final grants, and there were a few who indicated that they would be trying for a higher level of certification.

The ability to make significant changes to designs seems to be a limiting factor in trying for higher certification standards. Respondents felt that it was expensive to make changes once they have been through the design process. As such, the program should seek applicants prior to project design phase.

➤ **Set more stringent hurdles for applicants and work to increase the level of energy efficiency by being more selective in the award of future funds.**

For most awardees, the certification level in the initial application was determined by what was realistic to achieve given the available project budget. Two respondents indicated that they based their decision on cost-effectiveness and chose a level at which any additional costs were outweighed by additional savings. Both indicated that “Silver” is most cost-effective, and the City of St. Louis recently passed an ordinance adopting LEED Silver Certification for all new construction city-owned buildings over 5,000 square feet. Some interviewees also cited design constraints as a reason for their chosen certification level.

There were, however, a couple of respondents with projects that were affected by the AmerenUE funds. One respondent would still have sought LEED certification but to a lower standard. An additional respondent, representing three projects, indicated that they would probably have incorporated some LEED-recommended methods anyway, but that the incentive made them push LEED to the forefront of the development process and “stretch their thinking”.

For the future, AmerenUE should further encourage energy efficiency enhancements (such as with these later two respondents). One way to do this is to encourage a system that is more selective and funds the higher levels of LEED certification or projects that clearly need assistance to reach any level of certification. Understandably, in the initial funding period, the goal was “to encourage the construction of green buildings that will serve as examples for future projects to emulate.” As such, the program decided to fund all 18 projects that applied rather than just selecting five or six that originally were budgeted for. In the future, it may be advantageous to be more selective in awarding AmerenUE funds. Based on our in-depth interviews, AmerenUE and the USGBC-STL went through the process of developing metrics and sorting through projects to set up a process for the future. In addition, our interview with the AmerenUE overseer indicated that they do not plan to accept “Certified” status in the future.

➤ **Better target promotional efforts to expand the reach of the program beyond those who would have pursued LEED certification anyway**

According to the USGBC-STL's program manager, promotional activities to date have targeted USGBC-STL's members and other professional organizations that have an interest in the building industry or that work in the building industry. However, the USGBC-STL program manager also indicated that with more time and money, marketing could be better focused and training participation could be significantly increased. Given that one of USGBC-STL's goals is to increase LEED-registered/certified building stock, promoting this program primarily to USGBC members might have contributed to project

applying for funds even though they planned on seeking LEED certification anyway. As such, in future funding cycles, AmerenUE should consider funds to expand the ability of the USGBC-STL to reach out to commercial and institutional buildings. Alternatively, AmerenUE could provide additional in-kind services to market the program (i.e., through current sources like the website, or other contacts with commercial customers.)

➤ **Develop a forum for feedback to assist with marketing and program redesign**

AmerenUE may want to consider supporting a forum for feedback from ongoing projects via email/the Web, key account reps, focus groups and/or other ways to gather information. As part of this effort, the program should consider the creation of case studies to document the effects and assist with education and promotional efforts. AmerenUE should also seek to document the press from the promotion of the initial 18 awards.

➤ **Document soft costs of LEED projects and consider providing additional support depending on findings**

According to respondents, perceived barriers to building to LEED standards include: cost premium; inexperience of contractors and building operators with LEED standards; record keeping for the existing building program; technical difficulty in making modifications to existing buildings; construction waste management; building to stringent energy standards when MO does not have an energy code at all (most local contractors currently do not have to build towards an energy code).

Several interviewees indicated that they would benefit from financial and/or technical support; several others indicated already having resources lined up. Specific technical support issues mentioned were energy calculations and information on alternative energy systems. Many respondents also stated that they would use external resources to complete the required energy calculations. As such, AmerenUE's goal of supporting soft costs, such as the additional paperwork and calculations required of LEED certification, is a valuable one. The program should document soft costs of the 18 LEED projects and consider providing additional support depending on findings from the study of the initial 18.

➤ **Re-examine allocation of funds to future trainings as well as the goals of these trainings to ensure that AmerenUE support is used where it is needed most. Work to improve trainings and consider increasing scholarship funding for future programs.**

Notably, all but four respondents indicated having attended some kind of training or event on green building and/or LEED prior to submitting the initial application. As might be expected, these respondents generally associate the training with USGBC-STL (only one interviewee recalled his training being an AmerenUE-sponsored one). While most respondents who attended some kind of green building/LEED training or other event found it valuable, all but one respondent indicated that the training was not instrumental in making the LEED decision for the specific project in question.

Based on a review of the data collected through a follow-up survey of training participants, there is room for improvements to the trainings, particularly in the exercises, in the level of detail provided to participants, and in the application to the region. (Notably, case studies of some of the first 18, described above, could be useful in providing details on the process and information specific to AmerenUE's territory.) Participant comments about the training also indicate that it may be good to have two levels of training, with one going beyond the basics for individuals already familiar with LEED.

Depending on the definition of overall program goals, AmerenUE should revisit its allocation of program funding. One specific area of inquiry we recommend is whether funding should be provided for training modules, and if so, whether AmerenUE and the Collaborative could use funds to improve the trainings. If the goal of the program is to increase the number of LEED certifications in the St. Louis area, then the effect of training attendance on participation in the grant component should be carefully evaluated, and program funds might be more effectively used for incentive grants or scholarships to the training sessions. The USGBC-STL reported that scholarship recipients were very appreciative of the funding and viewed the contribution as goodwill on AmerenUE's part.

Respondent suggestions to motivate people to seek LEED certification included: higher incentives, lower LEED costs, more media coverage, more education, more information (e.g., that complying with standards is achievable and not cost-prohibitive or cumbersome; one interviewee stressed the need for more concrete information on monthly savings, health issues, etc.).