2020 Town Hall Series: Sustainability Professionals
Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI) and the International Society of Sustainability Professionals (ISSP) have come together to host the inaugural Sustainability Professionals Town Hall. The event included a conversation on the future of sustainability, and how GBCI and ISSP have joined forces to elevate sustainability leadership across sectors. The partnership promises to help pave the way for a healthier, more resilient, sustainable and prosperous future for all. This event convened the sustainability community around the need to mobilize a green workforce, highlighting how to build organizations and communities that integrate sustainability into their culture and practices.

During the town hall event, Sarah Alexander introduced GBCI’s credentials – emphasizing the need for sustainability professionals in the job market. Fabian Sack shared the history and mission of ISSP, as well as the opportunities created through its partnership with GBCI. Mahesh Ramanujam spoke of his reimagined vision for the next generation of GBCI and the future of sustainability and professional credentialing.

**Professional Sustainability Credentials**

GBCI’s credentials are a powerful way for professionals to showcase their knowledge, experience and credibility in the green building and sustainability marketplace. Whether you are a student, emerging professional or industry expert, a GBCI credential helps you stand out from the crowd and showcase your expertise to clients, industry professionals and potential employers. GBCI credentials consist of competency exams and certificate programs. Several of GBCI’s available credentials are listed alphabetically below.

**LEED Green Associate**

LEED credentials denote proficiency in today’s sustainable design, construction and operations standards. More than 205,000 professionals have earned a LEED credential to help advance their careers. The **LEED Green Associate** is a foundational credential signifying core competency in green building principles. The LEED Green Associate credential affirms a professional’s thorough comprehension of basic green building principles and practices as well as an understanding of the LEED rating system. The exam is ideal for those newer to sustainability and LEED.

**LEED Accredited Professional with specialty (LEED AP)**

The **LEED AP with specialty** is an advanced credential signifying expertise in green building and specialty in one of the LEED rating systems. LEED APs are experts in their field and leaders in their organizations. The available specialties are Building Design and Construction (BD+C), Operations and Maintenance (O+M), Interior Design and Construction (ID+C), Neighborhood Development (ND) and Homes.

**SITES AP**

The **SITES AP** is the first credential designed specifically for those specializing in sustainable landscapes and communities. The credential establishes a common framework to define the profession of sustainable landscape design and development, and also provides landscape professionals with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, expertise and commitment to the profession. The exam was built on the expertise of leading practitioners and serves as the premier credential for landscape designers and developers.
Originally designed by ISSP, the Sustainability Excellence Associate (SEA) credential demonstrates an understanding of core sustainability concepts and best practices. SEA is designed for those who are new to the sustainability field, including students, recent graduates or professionals interested in incorporating sustainability concepts into their work.

The Sustainability Excellence Professional (SEA) demonstrates advanced knowledge and extensive experience in the sustainability field. This credential is intended to recognize leaders and experts who are at the forefront of the transition to a more sustainable world. In order to earn an SEA credential, candidates must demonstrate professional excellence in and mastery of several key fields, including stakeholder engagement, core sustainability concepts, and implementation of sustainable strategies.

**TRUE Advisor**
The TRUE Advisor certificate showcases commitment to preserving and improving the environment through zero waste strategies. A companion to the TRUE Rating System, the TRUE Advisor certificate helps affirms professionals’ capacity to divert and document unnecessary waste from landfills. Professionals with the desire to assist others in achieving zero waste operations should pursue this certificate.

To learn more about credentialing options, please visit this link. Additionally, feel free to contact GBCI if you have any questions about available credentials, or your own credential maintenance.

**Making Sustainability Standard Practice**

In 2017, GBCI formally partnered with ISSP to empower professionals to advance sustainability within organizations and their communities through professional certification and credentialing. Both organizations are focused on ensuring that professionals across all industries are armed with the knowledge and skills to holistically integrate sustainability culture and practice throughout business operations. As part of this partnership, GBCI is delivering two professional credentials to the market: Sustainability Excellence Associate and Sustainability Excellence Professional. Both of these credentials were formally launched during the joint town hall event and are now available for any professionals interested in pursuing them.

The Sustainability Excellence Associate and Sustainability Excellence Professional credentials recognize individuals dedicated to making the world a more sustainable place; economically, socially and environmentally. Credential holders help organizations and communities of all types integrate sustainability best practice throughout business operations.
The two credentials were originally developed by ISSP through years of rigorous research. Hundreds of sustainability professionals and organizations worked together to define the core competencies required to be effective in the sustainability field, developing a way to provide formal recognition of knowledge, skills and abilities. GBCI now administers and delivers the credentials, while ISSP continues to provide the best-in-class education to support exam preparation, credential maintenance and professional development.

Today, there are already nearly 400 credentialed Sustainability Excellence Associates and Professionals. As was announced during the town hall event, GBCI will fully fund an additional 100 credentials for underserved and underrepresented communities to empower a more diverse and inclusive sustainability workforce. Together, ISSP and GBCI are working to drive the adoption of sustainable business practices that help foster global competitiveness and enhance environmental performance, human health, and social benefits.

The Case for Sustainability Education

Today, 90% of Fortune 500 companies participate in sustainability reporting. This has created a growing need for qualified professionals who can help support and lead sustainable initiatives across a variety of organizations.

To better prepare for future shocks and meet external demands, companies are increasingly recognizing that they must shift their view of long-term resilience. No company will prove resilient long-term without ensuring outstanding ESG performance, embracing the role they must play in helping society to decarbonize, and recognizing that people are at the heart of business.

For this reason, organizations are rapidly integrating sustainability into their business processes to increase profits, comprehensively manage risk, and better engage key stakeholder groups. By holistically applying sustainability concepts, organizations can manage resources more efficiently, improve corporate standing, retain professional talent, and create a more positive impact on local communities. Effective corporate sustainability minimizes the impact of rising energy costs, supports compliance with federal, state, and local regulation, and demonstrates a higher standard of leadership to customers.
Sustainability professionals are not limited to any one field. They can be business managers, scientists, HR professionals, non-profit administrators, purchasing agents, consultants, architects, engineers and many others. Although their specific career paths might differ, sustainability professionals are all alike in that they promote positive environmental, social, and financial outcomes.

Credentials can make you a more competitive player in the job market. Organizations see credentialed professionals as individuals who can drive business value, effectively communicate key concepts, and best understand and support client’s needs.

Deb Friedel’s story is a powerful example of sustainability education in action. A Corporate Director of Sustainability at Delaware North Corporation, Deb was temporarily furloughed as a result of COVID-19’s impact on the hospitality industry. Deb used this time to obtain both a Sustainability Excellence Associate and Sustainability Excellence Professional credential from GBCI. Now that Deb’s furlough is over, she is incorporating the content she learned while studying for the exams into her daily work. Deb values the common language she is able to draw upon to deepen the impact of her work.

Celebrating our Sustainability Professionals

Sustainability Excellence credential holders are shaping the culture at organizations around the world. This includes leaders like Jeff Yorzyk, an SEP credential holder who was instrumental in establishing the partnership between ISSP and GBCI. Formerly President of ISSP, Jeff led the organization through the development of the SEA and SEP credentials.

Now the Director of Sustainability at HelloFresh, he has the unique opportunity to build a sustainability program for the global leader in meal kit delivery. Jeff has continued to stay involved and represents the Sustainability Excellence credentials as a member of the GBCI Credential Steering Committee supporting our ongoing efforts to ensure the highest quality credentialing programs across the board.
This also includes Natalie Walker, Sustainability Director at the University of Pennsylvania. Early on in her career, Natalie’s previous employer, GreenCertified, encouraged and supported her efforts to obtain both a LEED Green Associate and SEA credential. In Natalie’s own words, she decided to get credentialed because, “Although sustainability is a very broad term, covering many industries and sectors, there are some basic building blocks that are relevant for all professionals seeking to understand and apply the principles of sustainability to their discipline. The requirements for achieving the Sustainability Excellence credentials combine broad sustainability literacy content with rigorous understanding of the history of the movement.”

There are hundreds of stories like Deb’s, Jeff’s and Natalie’s that inspire us, and demonstrate how each one of us can participate in the transformation process through learning, sharing, and implementing their knowledge to build a better world.

Our Sustainably Excellence credential holders sit among a diverse ecosystem of other GBCI professionals who support a workforce delivering on a healthier people, in healthier places, building a healthier economy vision. We celebrate the members of our community who have achieved credentials in other sustainability areas. This includes Cece Haydock, a SITES AP and LEED AP from New York. Cece has been involved in several SITES projects, including the Atlanta Beltline, which is currently pursuing certification, as well as the Hempstead Plains Interpretive Center – a certified SITES Pilot Project.

Of course, no celebration would be complete without our incredible LEED Fellows. This past October, GBCI announced its most recent class of LEED Fellows – twenty-five individuals from across the world recognized for their mastery of LEED and exceptional work in advancing green building practices. This list includes Alessandro Bisagni, Founder and President of BEE Incorporations. Over the course of Alessandro’s career, he has managed nearly 400 green building projects in more than 30 countries. Alessandro’s dedication to sustainability has impacted over 40 million square feet of space, including China’s first LEED Platinum certified hotel, the world’s first certified LEED O+M v4.1 retail project, and the very first project in Mongolia.

This year’s LEED Fellow class also includes Ibrahim Kronfol, one of the Middle East’s first LEED Fellows. Ibrahim is a Senior Mechanical Engineer with over 10 years of post-qualification experience at Dar Al Handasah in Beirut, Lebanon. Since 2005, Ibrahim has contributed to a range of projects including airports, hospitals and educational facilities. Since 2017, he has managed the mechanical design unit of Dubai Airport, delivering sustainable solutions to the most heavily trafficked airport in the world. Thank you to all of this years’ LEED Fellows, as well as everyone who is maintaining or pursuing credentials with GBCI. Together, we can create a healthier economy, healthy people, and a healthy planet.
Speakers

Mahesh Ramanujam
President and CEO
U.S Green Building Council

Fabian Sack
Director
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