



# what! LEED® again?

Bruce Offner

## How you can bid a LEED® project and win?

**SINCERELY BELIEVE THAT THE STATEMENT** above is the normal response (plus a few expletives), when the majority of contractors see LEED on a set of construction documents. The company wants to bid on a project, but the feeling in-house is, "We need this one, but it's a LEED project" or, "We have no experience. So, how can we bid it and win this job?"

When LEED appears in your plans and specs you can bet that a ton of green building materials and systems, for which you have little or no experience, are in there. As a result, we construction professionals immediately begin to utter even more colorful four letter words. Interestingly enough though, within the past few years, the four letter word I have heard most often from contractors in reaction to LEED and green building in general, is the word "HELP!" And the first step to getting help is figuring out what type of help is needed.

The most effective self-help method on the market today, for becoming successful in the green market, is education and training. There are several programs and workshops, some with nationally recognized cer-

tifications, which are specifically designed for construction professionals. The USGBC and its local chapters offer training for contractors in becoming adept at the LEED submittal process. Another of the training programs available is Green Advantage. The intent of Green Advantage training is to instruct the project team; Estimators, Project Managers, Supers, Forepersons, Suppliers, Providers and even the "boots on the ground," the core principles behind sustainability, how to integrate green practices into the construction process and to strengthen the LEED building team. The Green Advantage® Contractor Training Program is complimentary to LEED, it explains how to use this design tool, and it can and will help you find and fit the missing pieces in the LEED puzzle. The acquired knowledge and proper training, provides protection against the tendencies of bidders to present incomplete or erroneous numbers on bid day, and then, come onto your project and do the "seen this, done this, built this" routine and place the project established LEED goals in jeopardy before they submit their first bill!

Due to new green building requirements the CM/GC will assume two important responsibilities, (i.e. challenges) during the bidding process that were previously experienced only on design build partnerships. These challenges are not insurmountable and once incorporated into your bidding process will serve to strengthen your company's bidding and performance.

**Challenge #1**

The design team will rely heavily upon the CM/GC's expertise in preparing their "newly green" bidding community to properly and competitively price the work shown.

**The Response**

A. A large majority of your prospective sub-contractor bidders are not adequate

ly acquainted with green suppliers or know how to contact them so; you must familiarize your bidders with the green building materials and systems that appear within the bid documents. They will look to you for guidance and your uncertainties will surely result in higher prices.

B. Lay the groundwork by demanding that the subject, LEED, be thoroughly covered at the pre-bid conference. There should be a discussion by and with the design pro-fessionals to dispel any of your concerns. Make sure that you understand the design intent and the use of green building materials and systems on the project. This will certainly go a long way in streamlining your bid day and reducing the artificial inflation of costs due to knee jerk reaction to the unknown.

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**Challenge #2**

You will be entertaining a plethora of substitution requests for green building materials and systems in the pre-bid RFI process.

**The Response**

A. The main issue that must be dealt with at bid time is the tendency on the part of sub-contractors to use supplier materials costs and submittal data with which they are familiar. Your cost providers must also be made aware of the design intent, especially if you rely solely upon subs pricing in your bids. Do not expect the bidding community to be versed in the requirements of regional materials and recycled content. The onus to educate your sub-contractor bidders and materi-

als providers about LEED requirements will be yours.

B. Formally request the owner and design team hold a pre-bid conference for the bidding sub-contractors. Quite frankly, this should be mandatory on all LEED® projects. Raise questions and seek clarification on every green product and system at this time. Topics covered at this meeting should range from the building certification level desired to a review of the materials and systems and how to contact the proprietary manufacturers, or demand they attend. The assigned LEED AP should also be present.

Minutes of the pre-bid conference should be kept and distributed to all holders of bidding documents. Naturally, not all sub-contractors will be able to attend the meeting, so the minutes take on a greater value

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to all. The information disseminated to the bidders from this meeting can be valuable and these minutes should become part of the bid documents in formal addenda and a part of the scope outline on bid day. Additionally, by virtue of their becoming part of the project documents, the successful bidder can readily integrate them into their sub-contract agreements at the time of award to prevent misunderstandings later on in the project.

This is no time to worry about the future of our industry and the bleak forecasts. We all know that downturns are tough and we will recover. The current state of our industry can be the opportune time for your pre-construction and job-site teams to re-evaluate what's required, make the transition, and become knowledgeable about green building practices.

Take the above ideas, use them. Train your team and go out there and land some work! ■

*Bruce Offner is an active member of the Delaware Valley Green Building Council, holds Green Advantage® Commercial & Residential certificates and currently devotes his time training the building industry community about the environmental and economic benefits of green building.*



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