

South Bay Cities Council of Governments

April 13, 2026

TO: SBCCOG Steering Committee

FROM: Jacki Bacharach, SBCCOG Executive Director
Kim Fuentes, SBCCOG Deputy Executive Director
Jake Romoff, SBCCOG Project Coordinator

SUBJECT: SBCCOG LEED Training and Accreditation Options

BACKGROUND

The South Bay Cities Council of Governments (SBCCOG) has received \$30,000 in funding from the SoCalREN to cover training and exam fees for 30 city staffers (est. 2 per city) to obtain their LEED credentials. Training for city staff is anticipated to begin June 2026 to help ensure city staff receive the most recent revisions to the certifications program. All training and exams need to be completed by Dec. 4, 2026. A small portion of the funding is also allocated to SBCCOG staff to facilitate the training arrangements.

Leadership In Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is a globally recognized certification system used to evaluate the sustainable and environmental design of a building. LEED was created by the US Green Building Council (USGBC) -- the organization that oversees updating the evaluation criteria, reviewing submitted buildings, and administering the exam for credentials. Buildings earn LEED certification by meeting specific standards across categories including design, construction, and operations, with different levels such as Certified, Silver, Gold, and Platinum.

Obtaining the credential builds expertise in sustainable building design related to energy efficiency and internal environmental quality at the agency level. LEED accredited staff can assist in city, commercial, and residential building development and design and provide expert information to the community potentially leading to lower utility bills. The US Green Building Council reports LEED-certified buildings typically consume 25% less energy, reduce carbon emissions by 34%, and use 11% less water. Staff expertise on sustainable buildings can generate opportunities to increase the efficiency of existing facilities and apply sustainable practices to future buildings.

Individuals can obtain LEED credentials in two different categories: Green Associate, and Accredited Professional. The Green Associate credential is an entry level certification that covers the basic principles of green building design and LEED concepts. The Accredited Professional (AP) credential is more specialized and indicates advanced knowledge in a specific area of LEED, such as Building Design and Construction (BD+C), Operations and Maintenance (O+M),

or Interior Design and Construction (ID+C). To complete the Accredited Professional credential, one must have first obtained their Green Associate.

CITY ACCESS

All costs for training and exam fees will be incurred upfront or reimbursed by SBCCOG. SBCCOG proposes to purchase an approved training package and provide interested city staff login credentials to access the materials. The SBCCOG will provide a set time and date for any live training sessions. For the exam fees, city staff that have completed the training course will register for the desired exam date and pay the exam fees. Exam fees will be reimbursed by the SBCCOG once confirmation of exam completion has been received. All training and exams need to be completed by December 4, 2026 to be reimbursed.

ANALYSIS

Exam fees are a flat rate of \$250 for Green Associate and \$350 for Accredited Professional and are administered through USGBC. However, training for LEED exams is offered through a variety of online services that vary in format, content, and costs. SBCCOG staff reviewed training packages of three different providers and obtained pricing ranging from \$4,200 - \$24,750. The following provides details offered by each firm:

Training Provider Options:

1. ***US Green Building Council (USGBC)***-- is the administrator for the LEED exams and offers study guides available for purchase on their website. A “Course Catalog Subscription” grants users 1 year of unlimited access to all study guide material. This covers content related to the Green Associate and the Accredited Professional exams.
 - USGBC Course Catalog Subscription - **\$250/person, \$7,500 total**
2. ***Green Building Education Services (GBES)*** -- an online service that offers training for exams across multiple credentials in the green building space. Different Training options:
 - **Option 1 - \$140/person, \$4,200 total** – GBES Core-Unlimited Exam Prep offers 1 year of unlimited access to study guide material for all credentials including study guides, recorded lectures, flash cards, practice tests, and asynchronous modules.
 - **Option 2 - \$825/person, \$24,750** – 8 live group training sessions (2 hours) by a LEED professional covering both Green Associate and Accredited Professional Content.
 - This option assumes all staff would want to earn the same Accredited Professional credentials specialty. This option doesn’t include unlimited access.
 - **Option 3 (Hybrid) - \$333/person, \$10,000 total** – 4 live group training sessions for ONLY Green Associate content and 1year unlimited access to study guide material for all Accredited Professional credentials
 - This option allows city staff to prepare for their Accredited Professional exam on their own time and provides flexibility for staff to choose different specializations.

3. **Archiroots** -- a competitor to GBES and offers training for exams across multiple credentials in the green building space. Archiroots provides a “no pass” money back guarantee. Different Training options:

- **Option 1 - \$283/person, \$8,500 total** – Unlimited access to all study guide material including study guides, recorded lectures, flash cards, practice tests, and asynchronous modules.
- **Option 2 - \$333/person, \$10,000 total** – 12 live group training sessions (2 hours) by a LEED professional covering both Green Associate and Accredited Professional Content; doesn’t include unlimited access.
- **Option 3 (Combined) - \$450/person, \$13,500 total** – 12 live group training sessions (2 hours) by a LEED professional covering both Green Associate and Accredited Professional Content. Unlimited access to all study guide material including study guides, recorded lectures, flash cards, practice tests, and asynchronous modules.

The following summarizes services and related costs:

	USGBC	GBES			Archiroots		
	Option 1	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Unlimited Study Material Access	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
Live Training for Green Associate			✓	✓		✓	✓
Live Training for Accredited Professional			✓			✓	✓
Total Training Cost:	\$7,500	\$ 4,200	\$ 24,750	\$10,000	\$8,500	\$10,000	\$13,500

After reviewing the options, SBCCOG staff are recommending Green Building Education Services (GBES) Option 3 because it offers the best combination of cost-effective training with a flexible structure that allows city staff to choose the Accredited Professional credential they wish to pursue.

BUDGET

The SBCCOG received \$30,000 in total funding from the SoCalREN. The total costs of exam fees for 30 city staffers are estimated at \$18,000. The recommended training option (GBES Option 3) costs \$10,000, leaving \$2,000 for SBCCOG staff facilitation.

- Training: \$10,000
- Exam Fees: \$18,000
- SBCCOG Staff: \$2,000

RECOMMENDATION

Recommend Board approve training through Green Building Education Services (GBES) Option 3 in total of \$10,000 and authorize payment in the amount of up to \$18,000 for exam fees.