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## A Practical Approach to Sustainability

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Facing a down economy, shrinking budgets and significant pressures to outperform the year's commitments, how do you find time for sustainability?

Let's face it, if there is no payback within the current year, it's unlikely that you can get capital or modify your operating budget to make any kind of significant difference towards a Green Program, right?

### Wrong!

In a recessionary environment there's more than one way to cut costs and leverage those savings to support other initiatives. In addition to pure cost savings a little bit of planning and adjustment of current policies can yield results with little or no additional expense.

Our approach at IFMA, beginning in August of 2008, was to establish a Facility Managers' Green Peer Group (FMGPG) to foster open information exchange and provide a forum for sharing best practices. The subject of Sustainability is the minds of everyone in the realm of Facilities Management these days. The [LEED standards](#) (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) are broad and complex; and it is apparent that, other than a very select group of individuals, no one understands all of it.

Peer Groups may be one of the very best ways to learn from the experience of others. In a peer group there are *no competitors*, and you really have a chance to learn the "Best Practices" from other facility managers in a comfortable environment.

The initial goal of the Peer Group we formed was to educate the members on the five major categories of LEED as it related to "Existing Building Operations and Maintenance structure" or "EBOM." Perquisites and Credits are awarded in six categories:

- Sustainable Sites
- Water Efficiency
- Energy and Atmosphere

- Materials and Resources
- Indoor Air Quality
- Innovation in Operations

The group completed an initial year-long program that addressed the following bottom-line topics:

1. Approaching sustainability concepts with minimal or no impact to your FM (Facilities Management) resources and budget;
2. Marketing your FM organization through sustainability involvement;
3. Taking advantage of LEED benefits without certifying your site;
4. Decoding the myths and fears of LEED;
5. Strengthen your FM position by demonstrating sustainability initiatives;
6. Demonstrate the hidden value of your FM organization by introducing and achieving sustainable initiatives; and
7. Educating your staff, customers and stakeholders as well as yourself on sustainability and the workplace .

One LEED Case Study ( managed by an IFMA member CFM & LEED-AP ] has shown the following validated results:

- Effectively reduced electricity use 18%
- Effectively reduced natural gas use 41%
- Reduced domestic water use 22%
- Reduced landscape water use 76%
- Diverts up to 85% of its solid waste
- Reduced total pollution by 26%
- Reduced CO2 emissions 17%

A study by [CoStar Group](#), the commercial equivalent of MLS (Multiple Listing Service), has found that sustainable "green" buildings outperform their peer non-green assets in key areas such as occupancy, sale price, and rental rates—sometimes by wide margins.

The results indicate a broader demand by property investors and tenants for buildings that have earned either LEED® certification or the Energy Star® label can strengthen the "business case" for green buildings, which proponents have increasingly cast as financially sound investments.

At the end of the day, even in a down economy: **“Do Something!”** You can make a difference even with little or no budget in the current year.

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### About the Work Design Collaborative and *Future of Work Agenda*

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