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## LEED CERTIFICATION: TRENDS IN THE SPORT INDUSTRY

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Synopsis:

Abstract:

LEED CERTIFICATION: TRENDS IN THE SPORT INDUSTRY

In recent years sustainability and green initiative programs have become a priority within the sports industry (Blankenbuehler & Kunz, 2014). One way that facilities and sports teams have attempted to approach this is through Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, Certification (LEED). Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification is a program designed by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC), to help buildings become environmentally responsible in areas such as efficiency and sustainability among others. According to the USGBC it is shown that buildings contribute 39% of all carbon dioxide emissions, 40% of all energy used, and 13% of water consumption (Kellison & Kim, 2014). Thus the impact of facilities on the environment is substantial and deserves attention. The USGBC has taken notice and come up with a certification process for facilities in order to attempt to become more environmentally responsible. The LEED certification uses a standardized scorecard; created by the USGBC; consisting of six main categories; sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy & atmosphere, material & resources, indoor environmental quality, and innovation; these categories then consist of smaller sub categories relating to each area. Facilities can score points in each of these categories; through their accumulation of points the facilities can reach various levels of certification (USGBC, 2014). There are three main reasons for organizations to pursue LEED certification for their facilities; public relations, economical advantages, and environmental benefits (Kellison & Kim, 2014). Leagues, sports managers, and teams have begun to see the potential that exists in becoming environmentally friendly, and are starting to capitalize on it. This allows teams to tap into a whole new market and gain different types of sponsorships and endorsements (Blankenbuehler &

Kunz). On the other hand complying fully with LEED recommendations as stated by Mallen, Adams, Stevens, and Thompson, (2010), can be difficult to obtain due to financial, time, and educational demands of the organization. Since 2009, there have been 4 NFL, 6 NBA, and 5 MLB facilities that have become LEED certified (USGBC, 2014).

This study has examined how sports facilities accumulate points toward certification; from the aforementioned categories. An examination of scorecards for LEED certified facilities, in MLB, NFL, and the NBA, can provide for the identification of trends and scoring patterns. In comparing these facilities' scorecards, the data showed a difference in the overall score of buildings classified as New Construction or Existing Building. In addition nine of the twelve with available scorecards scored over 40% of their points in two categories. Overall it was discovered certain categories were targeted for point accumulation while others were scored poorly in by these facilities as a whole. This raises a couple of questions, does the certification process need to be changed? Instead of allowing facilities to score the majority of their points in just a few categories should it be about the efficiency of scoring in each category to qualify. Are LEED certified buildings really more sustainable than non-certified? While on average LEED buildings use 18-39 % less energy, there are still 28-35% of certified buildings that actually use more energy than their non-certified counterparts. In addition, to this it seems that the various levels of certification are somewhat misleading. There is little to no correlation between energy performance and level of certification (Birt, Mancini, Newsham, 2009). While one would assume Certified Gold should be more energy efficient than just a certified building that is not always the case.

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