



## Guidance for Construction Projects

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Green Business Certification, Inc (GBCI)  
Washington, DC

# OVERVIEW

The “Guidance for Construction projects” details the scope, process, and technical requirements for construction projects interested in pursuing TRUE certification using the [TRUE Rating System](#). This document should be consulted in conjunction with the most current version of the TRUE Rating System and [TRUE Addenda](#).

## Certification Scope

A construction project is defined as any work carried out in the construction of new structures and/or major renovation of existing structures. There is no maximum or minimum size for a construction project to be considered eligible for certification.

The physical project boundary for a construction project is defined as the legal property boundary and any construction activities and processes within that boundary. This must include all onsite construction work, temporary project trailers, and any other relevant operations that take place within the project boundary. The project may not exclude sections of the property to create boundaries in unreasonable shapes for the sole purpose of achieving certain credits. The current rating system does not certify the owner/organization or their products or services as zero waste.

The entire duration of the construction project from the time of construction site procurement must be included in the project scope, including all phases of construction as well as demolition or deconstruction and site preparation prior to development if they are included within the construction project owner's scope of work. Projects should apply for certification only after the certificate of occupancy or a similar document verifying project completion has been received, and diversion data must be provided for the entire duration of construction. Projects applying for certification must submit their data and TRUE application within 6 months of the receipt of certificate of occupancy or a similar document verifying project completion. Projects that have not yet received their document verifying project completion or are still under construction but wish to pursue TRUE certification may look into the precertification process as a mid-step until they meet the parameters necessary to pursue Certification.

Construction Projects applying for TRUE certification adhere to the same definition of zero waste, diversion calculation method, and acceptable diversion methods listed in the TRUE Rating System, [Diversion Data Additional Guidance](#), and other technical guidance documents or addenda. The same material scope is also applied to construction projects, with the clarification that the material scope must include all materials generated for disposal or diversion by construction processes including but not limited to soil, drywall, and concrete.

## Certification Process

The certification process for construction is the same as outlined for facilities in the TRUE Rating System and process section of the [Guide to Certification](#), with some key differences outlined below.

### *Registration*

- The fees for certifying a construction project differ from the fee structure for facilities. Please visit the [TRUE website](#) or [contact us](#) for more information on fees.

- Registration must be complete, all registration and certification fees paid, and a completed application and documentation received by GBCI before the review can begin.

#### *Application & review*

- The application and documentation will be submitted after construction has been completed. Applications must be received within 6 months of the completion of work.
- The review timelines are the same as for a standard TRUE project.
- The minimum and maximum points and certification level point ranges have been adjusted, as not all credits are applied to construction projects. The following section provides the point ranges and applicable certification levels for a construction project pursuing TRUE certification.
- Certification is awarded for a one-time occurrence of a construction project.

#### *Post-certification*

- Construction projects are not subject to annual certification maintenance requirements post-completion, as they are one-time occurrences.

# TRUE Scorecard

Adapted for construction projects

TRUE Construction Certification Levels	Points	KEY
Certified	28 - 34	AG= additional guidance Y= refer to guidance in the next section in addition to the TRUE Rating System. N= no additional guidance or adaptation, refer to TRUE Rating System. N/A= not applied to construction.
Silver	35 - 41	
Gold	42 - 57	
Platinum	58 - 74	

Redesign (4 points)		Points	AG
Credit 1	Right size collection containers and service levels	1	Y
Credit 2	Restructure solid waste collection agreements for zero waste	1	N
Credit 3	Review all 9 points of generation	1	Y
Credit 4	Complete review of supply chain	1	N
Reduce (5 points)		Points	AG
Credit 1	Document materials reduced by commodity	1	Y
Credit 2	Implement tracking programs to eliminate waste before it occurs	1	N
Credit 3	Adopt a goal to reduce the overall size/amount of product packaging	1	Y
Credit 4	Go paperless for at least one major office function	1	Y
Credit 5	Set all printers to duplex print	1	N
Credit 6	Practice grass-cycling for all mowed surfaces	0	N/A
Credit 7	Reduce yard trimming waste through native landscaping or xeriscaping	0	N/A
Reuse (7 points)		Points	AG
Credit 1	Develop systems that emphasize reuse	1	N
Credit 2	Document pallet and shipping container reuse	1	Y
Credit 3	Implement reusable transport containers	1	N
Credit 4	Establish program to reuse office supplies and materials	1	N
Credit 5	Use reusable/durable food service ware	1	N
Credit 6	Donate all food safe for human consumption	1	N
Credit 7	Participate in animal feed program for inedible food	1	N
Compost (Re-earth) (4 points)		Points	AG
Credit 1	Collect compostables separately from other materials	1	Y

Compost (Re-earth) (cont.)		Points	AG
Credit 2	Compost, digest or reuse yard trimmings	0	N/A
Credit 3	Compost food scraps and/or soiled paper on-site	1	N
Credit 4	Compost food scraps and/or soiled paper off-site	1	N
Credit 5	Utilize/reuse compost or mulch onsite	0	N/A
Credit 6	Implement other process technologies for organic materials	1	N
Credit 7	Use compost from site for on-site food production	0	N/A
Recycle (3 points)		Points	AG
Credit 1	Meet highest and best use for 80% of materials by weight	1	N
Credit 1.2	Meet highest and best use for 100% of materials by weight	1	N
Credit 2	Determine end markets for recycled commodities	1	N
Zero Waste Reporting (3 points)		Points	AG
Credit 1	Document diversion by commodity or waste	1	Y
Credit 2	Track financial data for diversion and waste disposal	1	Y
Credit 3	Generate climate impact report using the U.S. EPA WARM Model	1	Y
Diversion (5 points)		Points	AG
Credit 1	Diversion is 90.1-94.9%	1	Y
Credit 2	Diversion is 95%-96.9%	1	Y
Credit 3	Diversion is 97%-98.9%	1	Y
Credit 4	Diversion is 99-99.9%	1	Y
Credit 5	Diversion is 100%	1	Y
Zero Waste Purchasing (9 points)		Points	AG
Credit 1	Adopt an Environmentally Preferred Purchasing (EPP) guideline or policy	1	N
Credit 2	Include preference for durable goods in EPP policy or guideline	1	N
Credit 3	Give preference to sustainably produced paper and wood products	1	N
Credit 4	Identify EPP items in purchasing catalogs	1	N
Credit 5	Track purchase of environmentally preferred products	1	N
Credit 6	Give preference to used, refurbished, and/or remanufactured goods	1	N
Credits 7.1 - 7.3	Any additional EPP practice(s)	3	N

Leadership (5 points)		Points	AG
Credit 1	Adopt zero waste goal at upper management level	1	Y
Credit 2	Review monthly diversion activities with upper management	1	Y
Credit 3	Encourage and incentivize employee participation	1	N
Credit 4	Take responsibility for company products and packaging	0	N/A
Credit 5	Require vendors to take responsibility for products and packaging	1	N
Credit 6	Promote zero waste in the community utilizing upper management personnel	1	Y
Training (9 points)		Points	AG
Credit 1	Provide zero waste goal/policy to all employees	1	Y
Credit 2	Incorporate zero waste into employee orientation	1	Y
Credit 3	Communicate with employees about zero waste activities quarterly	1	Y
Credit 4	Clearly label all collection receptacles	1	N
Credit 5	Train purchasing agents	1	N
Credit 6	Include zero waste in evaluation process and/or bonus structure	1	N
Credit 7	Dedicate at least one person for zero waste leadership role	1	N
Credit 8	Provide all employees access to zero waste training	1	N
Credit 9	TRUE Advisor	1	N
Zero Waste Analysis (5 points)		Points	AG
Credit 1	Conduct annual physical waste audit	1	Y
Credit 2	Analyze results of annual waste audit and implement recommendations	1	Y
Credit 3	Complete annual physical audit of recyclables	1	Y
Credit 4	Add rejected recyclables back into waste stream documentation	1	N
Credit 5	Engage employees in waste audit and/or analysis	1	N
Upstream Management (4 points)		Points	AG
Credit 1	Work with vendors to eliminate non-recyclable packaging	1	N
Credit 2	Give preference to vendors who embrace zero waste goals	1	N
Credit 3	Request vendors use 100% recyclable packaging	1	N
Credit 4	Request vendors redesign products for reuse and recycling	1	N

Hazardous Waste Prevention (5 points)		Points	AG
Credit 1	Properly handle hazardous materials	1	N
Credit 2	Save records for at least 3 years	1	Y
Credit 3	Reuse or recycle universal waste	1	N
Credit 4	Reduce the use of hazardous chemicals/materials	1	N
Credit 5	Collect universal wastes from employees and/or customers	1	Y
Closed Loop (3 points)		Points	AG
Credit 1	Require a minimum of 30% post-consumer recycled content for office paper	1	Y
Credit 2	Require a minimum of 20% post-consumer recycled content for janitorial paper products	1	N
Credit 3	Purchase compost from a local source	0	N/A
Credit 4	Ensure material remains in local markets and comes back on site	1	Y
Innovation (3 points)		Points	AG
Credit 1.1	Implement innovative waste reduction activity	1	N
Credit 1.2	Implement innovative waste reduction activity	1	N
Credit 1.3	Implement innovative waste reduction activity	1	N

# TECHNICAL GUIDANCE

The majority of the minimum program requirements (MPRs) and credits outlined in the TRUE Rating System are applicable to construction without any changes. However, some of the MPRs and credits have been adapted or marked not applicable to construction projects. This document includes specific technical guidance on these adaptations and eliminations. Please review this guidance in addition to referring to the scope and credit sections in the TRUE Rating System and all applicable [Addenda](#).

The following changes are applied to all MPRs and credits:

- “Facility” or “project” is replaced with “construction project.”
- “Employee” is replaced with “employees, subcontractors, and onsite vendors.”
- In the TRUE Rating System, “vendors” are defined as suppliers, or third-party organizations that sell/furnish goods, services, or materials to the construction project.
- All credit requirements are applied to actions and policies of the project and/or project owner. If the requirements are not applicable to these parties, but are occurring due to actions by contractors, subcontractors, and/or onsite vendors providing services to the site (food provision, labor, etc.), those actions will be considered so long as they are occurring directly related to the construction project itself and result in reduced waste. The credit narrative must explain why the requirements are not applicable to the project or project owner but are applicable to other parties. Some variations to this guidance may apply, which are identified in the credit-specific guidance in the following sections.

## Technical Guidance: Minimum Program Requirements

Minimum Program Requirement	Additional Guidance for Construction
<p>Company or project seeking certification has a Zero Waste policy in place.</p>	<p>Construction project seeking certification has a zero waste plan in place at the beginning of the construction project. Submittal Documentation: Incorporate zero waste into the construction plan. The plan must contain the following at minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project's zero waste goal</li> <li>• Procedures and containers for the management and diversion of materials</li> <li>• Consideration of reusable infrastructure and methods for sharing, repairing, reducing and reusing materials and products in the building process</li> <li>• Diversion performance monitoring and reporting procedures</li> </ul>
<p>Project has achieved an average 90% or greater overall diversion from landfill, incineration (WTE), and the environment for solid, non-hazardous wastes (referred to as “materials” herein) for the most recent 12 months. The most recent 12 months may conclude as far back as three months prior to the date the project application is submitted to allow for data to be collected. Diverted materials are reduced, reused, recycled, composted and/or recovered for productive use in nature or the economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversion data for the entirety of the project must be provided and the project must achieve a 90% or greater average diversion rate by weight.</li> <li>• Diversion activity must comply with the acceptable materials and diversion methods in the requirements language and TRUE Rating System.</li> <li>• The same required documentation displaying weight data and documentation from service providers verifying weights for at least one month must be provided. Please see the entry for Zero Waste Reporting Credit 1 in the TRUE Rating System.</li> <li>• In the instance waste and recyclable material are combined to send to a mixed-recovery facility with no viable alternative option, project teams may utilize the mixed-recovery facility and its provided diversion data for up to 25% of their material, provided the mixed-recovery facility has received third party certification of their recycling rates. All diversion numbers provided must exclude alternative daily cover (ADC).</li> <li>• In the instance mixed-recovery facility numbers are used, the following documentation must be provided:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An up-to date verification letter or certificate that confirms the third party certification of the mixed-recovery facility.</li> <li>• Documentation outlining the methodology used to determine the recycling rate obtained by the mixed-recover facility.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Project meets all federal, state/provincial and local solid waste and recycling laws and regulations. Project complies with all air, water and land discharge permits required for collection, handling or processing of materials.	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Project does not exceed a 10% contamination level for any materials that leave the site.	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Project submits 12 months of waste diversion data to GBCI annually to keep the certification current.	This requirement is not applied to construction projects.
Company submits a case study of zero waste initiatives.	No additional guidance or adaptation.
<b>General Project Information</b>	<b>Additional Guidance for Construction</b>
Documentation and information required to be provided by project teams to provide an overview of the project and its general operations.	No additional guidance or adaptation.



## Technical Guidance: Credits

Redesign	
Credit	Additional Guidance for Construction
Redesign Credit 1: Right size collection containers and service levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The required periodic review and adjustments of containers should take place during the construction.</li> <li>Refer to the credit entry in the TRUE Rating System for further requirements.</li> </ul>
Redesign Credit 2: Restructure solid waste collection agreements for zero waste	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Redesign Credit 3: Review all 9 points of generation	Conduct a review of materials in all points of generation as relevant (does not need to use the 9 points outlined in the TRUE Rating System). Identify the points of generation in the narrative.
Redesign Credit 4: Complete review of supply chain	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Reduce	
Credit	Additional Guidance for Construction
Reduce Credit 1: Document materials reduced by commodity	Baseline should be representative of construction project operations prior to the change. In the instance the reduction was made at the beginning of the project, baseline may represent data from a construction project with a similar scope of work.
Reduce Credit 2: Implement tracking programs to eliminate waste before it occurs	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Reduce Credit 3: Adopt a goal to reduce the overall size/amount of product packaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can be done for only inbound packaging if outbound is not applicable.</li> <li>Refer to the credit entry in the TRUE Rating System for further requirements.</li> </ul>
Reduce Credit 4: Go paperless for at least one major office function	This credit can be applied to any major construction function, not required to be office related.
Reduce Credit 5: Set all printers to duplex print	This credit is applicable to all printers used within the project boundary.
Reduce Credit 6: Practice grass-cycling for all mowed surfaces	This credit is not applicable to construction projects.
Reduce Credit 7: Reduce yard trimming waste through native landscaping or xeriscaping	This credit is not applicable to construction projects.

Reuse	
Credit	Additional Guidance for Construction
Reuse Credit 1: Develop systems that emphasize reuse	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Reuse Credit 2: Document pallet and shipping container reuse	Data documenting less than three consecutive months of the reuse process is allowed only in the instance the construction project takes place over less than three months. In this instance, data documenting the reuse process for all months the construction project is active is required.
Reuse Credit 3: Implement reusable transport containers	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Reuse Credit 4: Establish program to reuse office supplies and materials	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Reuse Credit 5: Use reusable/durable food service ware	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Reuse Credit 6: Donate all food safe for human consumption	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Reuse Credit 7: Participate in animal feed program for inedible food	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Compost	
Credit	Additional Guidance for Construction
Compost Credit 1: Collect compostables separately from other materials	This credit may also apply to outdoor areas where food is served such as near food trucks.
Compost Credit 2: Compost, digest or reuse yard trimmings	This credit is not applicable to construction projects.
Compost Credit 3: Compost food scraps and/or soiled paper on-site	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Compost Credit 4: Compost food scraps and/or soiled paper off-site	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Compost Credit 5: Utilize/reuse compost or mulch onsite	This credit is not applicable to construction projects.
Compost Credit 6: Implement other process technologies for organic materials	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Compost Credit 7: Use compost from site for on-site food production	This credit is not applicable to construction projects.

Recycle	
Credit	Additional Guidance for Construction
Recycle Credit 1: Meet Highest and Best Use for 80% of materials by weight	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Recycle Credit 1.2: Meet Highest and Best Use for 100% of materials	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Recycle Credit 2: Determine end markets for recycled commodities	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Zero Waste Reporting	
Credit	Additional Guidance for Construction
Zero Waste Reporting Credit 1: Document diversion by commodity or waste	See Guidance on MPR #2
Zero Waste Reporting Credit 2: Track financial data for diversion and waste disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline is not required.</li> <li>• In the instance the construction project is shorter than one year, reporting only must be provided for the duration of the project.</li> <li>• Refer to the credit entry in the TRUE Rating System for further detail.</li> </ul>
Zero Waste Reporting Credit 3: Generate climate impact report using the U.S. EPA WARM Model	No additional guidance or adaptation
Diversion	
Credit	Additional Guidance for Construction
Diversion Credits 1.1-1.5	See guidance on MPR #2.
Zero Waste Purchasing	
Credit	Additional Guidance for Construction
Zero Waste Purchasing Credit 1: Adopt an Environmentally Preferred Purchasing (EPP) guideline or policy	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Zero Waste Purchasing Credit 2: Include preference for durable goods in EPP policy or guideline	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Zero Waste Purchasing Credit 3: Give preference to sustainably produced paper and wood products	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Zero Waste Purchasing Credit 4: Identify EPP items in purchasing catalogs	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Zero Waste Purchasing Credit 5: Track purchase of environmentally preferred products	No additional guidance or adaptation.

Zero Waste Purchasing Credit 6: Give preference to used, refurbished, and/or remanufactured goods	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Zero Waste Purchasing Credit 7.1-7.3: Any additional EPP practice(s)	No additional guidance or adaptation.
<b>Leadership</b>	
<b>Credit</b>	<b>Additional Guidance for Construction</b>
Leadership Credit 1: Adopt Zero Waste goal at upper management level	The adopted goal must be specific for the construction project and must be adopted by the project owner, architect, and general contractor. For multiple construction projects, the goal can span across all projects, but it is not required.
Leadership Credit 2: Review monthly diversion activities with upper management	This requirement must occur with the leadership from the project.
Leadership Credit 3: Encourage and incentivize employee participation	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Leadership Credit 4: Take responsibility for company products and packaging	This credit is not applicable to construction projects.
Leadership Credit 5: Require vendors to take responsibility for products and packaging	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Leadership Credit 6: Promote Zero Waste in the community utilizing upper management personnel	No additional guidance or adaptation.
<b>Training</b>	
<b>Credit</b>	<b>Additional Guidance for Construction</b>
Training Credit 1: Provide Zero Waste goal/policy to all employees	Provide Zero Waste goal/policy to all site employees, including but not limited to contractors, subcontractors, estimators, and onsite vendors.
Training Credit 2: Incorporate Zero Waste into employee orientation	Incorporate Zero Waste into site employee orientation, including that for contractors, subcontractors, estimators, and onsite vendors.
Training Credit 3: Communicate with employees about Zero Waste activities quarterly	Communicate with all site employees including but not limited to contractors, subcontractors, estimators, and onsite vendors about Zero Waste activities quarterly. If the construction project does not run for 4 quarters, narration and documentation should be provided demonstrating communications or educational activities for the number of quarters the project was in operation.
Training Credit 4: Clearly label all collection receptacles	No additional guidance or adaptation.

Training Credit 5: Train purchasing agents	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Training Credit 6: Include Zero Waste in evaluation process and/or bonus structure	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Training Credit 7: Dedicate at least one person for Zero Waste leadership role	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Training Credit 8: Provide all employees access to Zero Waste training	Provide Zero Waste training to all site employees including but not limited to contractors, subcontractors, estimators, and onsite vendors.
Training Credit 9: TRUE Advisor	No additional guidance or adaptation.
<b>Zero Waste Analysis</b>	
Credit	Additional Guidance for Construction
Zero Waste Analysis Credit 1: Conduct annual physical waste audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual waste audit is replaced by at least one audit during the construction project.</li> <li>• If material is unsafe to lift or sort, a visual audit may be conducted provided information is provided in the narrative indicating which materials were sorted visually and why it was not possible to physically sort these materials.</li> <li>• Refer to the credit entry in the TRUE Rating System for further requirements.</li> </ul>
Zero Waste Analysis Credit 2: Analyze results of annual waste audit and implement recommendations	Annual waste audit is replaced by at least one audit during the construction project
Zero Waste Analysis Credit 3: Complete annual physical audit of recyclables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual waste audit is replaced by at least one audit during the construction project</li> <li>• For any materials unsafe to lift or sort, a visual audit may be conducted provided information is provided in the narrative indicating which materials were sorted visually and why it was not possible to physically sort these materials.</li> <li>• Refer to the credit entry in the TRUE Rating System for further requirements.</li> </ul>
Zero Waste Analysis Credit 4: Add rejected recyclables back into waste stream documentation	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Zero Waste Analysis Credit 5: Engage employees in waste audit and/or analysis	No additional guidance or adaptation.

### Upstream Management

Credit	Additional Guidance for Construction
Upstream Management Credit 1: Work with vendors to eliminate non-recyclable packaging	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Upstream Management Credit 2: Give preference to vendors who embrace Zero Waste goals	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Upstream Management Credit 3: Request vendors use 100% recyclable packaging	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Upstream Management Credit 4: Request vendors redesign products for reuse and recycling	No additional guidance or adaptation.

### Hazardous Waste Prevention

Credit	Additional Guidance for Construction
Hazardous Waste Prevention Credit 1: Properly handle hazardous materials	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Hazardous Waste Prevention Credit 2: Save records for at least 3 years	Records only required for duration of project
Hazardous Waste Prevention Credit 3: Reuse or Recycle universal waste	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Hazardous Waste Prevention Credit 4: Reduce the use of hazardous chemicals/ materials	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Hazardous Waste Prevention Credit 5: Collect universal wastes from employees and/or customers	Collect universal waste from employees, subcontractors, and/or onsite vendors.

### Closed Loop

Credit	Additional Guidance for Construction
Closed Loop Credit 1: Require a minimum of 30% post-consumer recycled content for office paper	Other types of office paper can be included, specification documents or plans.
Closed Loop Credit 2: Require a minimum of 20% post-consumer recycled content for janitorial paper products	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Closed Loop Credit 3: Purchase compost from a local source	This credit is not applicable to construction projects.
Closed Loop Credit 4: Ensure material remains in local markets and comes back on-site	No additional guidance or adaptation.

**Innovation**

Credit	Additional Guidance for Construction
Innovation Credit 1.1: Implement innovative waste reduction activity	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Innovation Credit 1.2: Implement innovative waste reduction activity	No additional guidance or adaptation.
Innovation Credit 1.3: Implement innovative waste reduction activity	No additional guidance or adaptation.

## ABOUT TRUE

TRUE (Total Resource Use and Efficiency) certification is used by projects to define, pursue and achieve their zero waste goals, cutting their carbon footprint and supporting public health. TRUE is administered by Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI)

## ABOUT GBCI

GBCI is the premier organization independently recognizing excellence in green business industry performance and practice globally. Established in 2008, GBCI exclusively administers project certifications and professional credentials and certificates within the framework of the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building rating systems, as well as the PEER standard for power systems, the WELL Building Standard, the Sustainable SITES Initiative (SITES), EDGE (Excellence in Design for Greater Efficiencies), TRUE certification, Investor Confidence Project (ICP) for energy efficiency retrofits, and RELi for resilient design. Through rigorous certification and credentialing standards, GBCI drives adoption of green business practices, which fosters global competitiveness and enhances environmental performance and human health benefits.