



GUIDE TO TRUE
ZERO WASTE CERTIFICATION

VERSION 1.0
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Green Business Certification, Inc. (GBCI)
Washington, D.C.

OVERVIEW

GBCI's TRUE Zero Waste certification program is used by facilities to define, pursue and achieve their zero waste goals, cutting their carbon footprint and supporting public health. The certification goes beyond diversion numbers and focuses on the upstream policies and practices that make zero waste successful in any organization and beyond.

TRUE certified spaces are environmentally responsible, more resource efficient and help turn waste into savings and additional income streams. By closing the loop, they cut greenhouse gases, manage risk, reduce litter and pollution, reinvest resources locally, create jobs and add more value for their organization and community. TRUE certified facilities:

- **Save money:** Waste is a sign of inefficiency and the reduction of waste reduces costs.
- **Progress faster:** A zero waste strategy improves upon production processes and environmental prevention strategies, which can lead to larger, more innovative steps.
- **Support sustainability:** A zero waste strategy supports the three P's – people, planet and profit.
- **Improve material flows:** A zero waste strategy uses fewer new raw materials and sends no waste materials to landfills, incineration (waste-to-energy) and the environment.

Implementing the requirements and credits of TRUE Zero Waste certification has the following benefits to any facility looking for a better approach to resource use and facility operations:

- Helps eliminate pollution — in our air, water and land — which threaten public health and ecosystems
- Improves their bottom line by reducing costs
- Cuts the ecological footprint by reducing materials, using recycled and more benign materials, and giving products longer lives by increasing reparability and ease of disassembly at end of life.
- Promotes positive forces for environmental and economic sustainability in the built environment by protecting the environment, reducing costs, driving the development of new markets, and producing jobs throughout our economy.
- Fosters strong total participation including training of all employees and zero waste relationships with vendors and customers
- Allows the facility to showcase their responsibility and commitment to the local and global community and the environment

Certification Levels

Certified: 31-37 points
 Silver: 38-45 points
 Gold: 46-63 points
 Platinum: 64-81 points

Overview of Categories & Points

Redesign	4	Leadership	6
Reduce	7	Training	8
Reuse	7	Zero Waste Analysis	5
Compost (Re-earth)	7	Upstream Management	4
Recycle	3	Hazardous Waste Prevention	5
Zero Waste Reporting	4	Closed Loop System	4
Diversion (Min 90%)	5	Innovation	3
Zero Waste Purchasing	9	Total Points	81

ELIGIBILITY AND FEES

Minimum Program Requirements

The following seven policies and practices are required for a project to earn and maintain TRUE Zero Waste certification:

- Company or project seeking certification has a zero waste policy in place.
- 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. Diverted materials are reduced, reused, recycled, composted and/or recovered for productive use in nature or the economy.
- 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.
- Project has data documenting a base year of waste diversion data, and measurements since the base year that adjust for changes in size, type and nature of business.
- Project does not exceed a 10% contamination level for any materials that leave the site.
- Project submits 12 months of waste diversion data to GBCI annually to keep the certification current.
- Company submits a case study of zero waste initiatives to be published on the GBCI website.

Introductory Pricing

	Silver, Gold and Platinum USGBC Members	Organizational USGBC or Non-members
Registration	\$1,200	\$1,500
Certification	Contact GBCI for a price quote	Contact GBCI for a price quote

Registration fee: The registration fee is charged on a per facility basis and must be paid at the time of registration.

Certification fee: The certification fee is charged on a per facility basis and must be paid prior to submitting a project’s application for certification. The fee is based on facility square footage and includes the standard services described below. Assessor travel costs are included. Additional fees may apply if supplemental reviews or services are necessary. There is a discount for USGBC Silver, Gold and Platinum level members and a 10% discount for paying the registration and certification fees together.

CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The TRUE Zero Waste certification program is an Assessor-based program that rates how well facilities perform in minimizing their non-hazardous, solid wastes and maximizing their efficiency in the use of resources. The Assessor is an impartial third party that delivers services under the direct supervision of GBCI, and is expected to review and assess compliance with the rating system requirements.

First, become familiar with the requirements and the available credits in the TRUE Zero Waste Rating System. Once you've familiarized yourself with the rating system and assessed your readiness, you can download the [registration form](#) online.

Register

Register your project by completing the registration form, signing the GBCI services agreement, and submitting payment for the registration fee.

Once you've submitted the registration form, you will receive the necessary information and guidance to complete the registration process. This includes an invoice for the registration fee, an invoice for the certification fee (upon request), the GBCI services agreement, and detailed submission guidelines.

When the registration process is complete, GBCI will provide access to additional certification resources and forms to complete the submission and review process (including the scorecard). If needed, an introductory call can be scheduled at this time to answer any remaining questions.

Apply

To apply your team will collect information, perform analyses, complete scorecard narratives, and prepare documentation demonstrating your achievements of the selected credits.

Technical questions that arise while preparing your application should be sent to true@gbci.org or submitted via GBCI's [contact us form](#). Additionally, a pre-submission phone call can be arranged to answer any questions on the application before submittal.

Once your documentation is ready for review, submit payment for the certification fees (if it hasn't been pre-paid) and your completed documentation to GBCI.

Assessment

Preliminary Documentation Review (15 Business days)

GBCI will review the documentation and provide comments in the Preliminary Review Report. If there is missing or insufficient documentation, GBCI may issue a Mid-Review Clarification request for additional information. If requested, clarification should be submitted within 10 business days of receiving the Mid-Review Clarification request. If needed, you will have the option of requesting a post-review conference call with your assessor to discuss any review comments.

On-Site Assessment

Once the project submits for review, the on-site assessment can be scheduled. The scheduling should typically allow for 30 business days advanced notice to allow time for the Assessor to complete the review process, coordinate site visit logistics and book any needed travel and accommodations. Depending on the size of the facility, the assessment activities may take half a day or a full day.

A site tour is required for the Assessor verify credits and requirements. During the site tour the Assessor will:

- a. Examine all department waste stations to assess collection methodology and contamination levels
- b. Look in bins and dumpsters to ensure low contamination/proper sorting of materials. They will also verify that the size and number of bins match documentation.
- c. View all credits that must be verified on-site (for example: on-site composting, garden, repurposed materials or equipment, reusable transport containers, etc.)
- d. Observe all employees and their zero waste practices. Interviews need to be conducted with key onsite personnel and randomly selected personnel from each department; each interview lasts for approximately 15 minutes.

At the conclusion of the assessment, the Assessor will request any additional information or documentation required to confirm compliance with outstanding credits. The final review timeline will begin once additional information is received.

Final Review (15 Business days)

After the assessment, GBCI will prepare a final Review Report indicating which credits have been earned, the final point score and certification level achieved. Once you have received this report, you may accept the results or choose to attempt new credits via an additional, supplemental round of review (*15 Business days, additional fees apply*).

Questions about your Certification?

If you have any questions about your review comments or final credit rulings, please contact us by replying to your results email. Our technical experts are here to help and are on-hand to answer your questions. In instances where we are unable to completely

resolve your concerns, and in order to protect the integrity and fairness of the certification programs administered by GBCI, you may formally challenge a ruling. Please refer to the [GBCI Review Challenge Policy](#) for more details.

Certify

Sign off on your project's final review

Accepting GBCI's Final Review Report is the last step in the TRUE Zero Waste certification process. Once you've accepted the final report you can no longer submit supplemental reviews or question a credit ruling

If you've earned certification, congratulations! You will receive an email with an official award letter, instructions on ordering a formal certificate of recognition and a glass plaque, and a request to submit a case study of your certification within 30 days. GBCI will also provide a contact from our Marketing team to assist you in promoting this achievement.

Ongoing certification maintenance

To maintain your certification, GBCI requires the facility to continue their zero waste activities and programs and to demonstrate their continued commitment by submitting their waste diversion data to GBCI annually. GBCI will review and confirm that the submitted data continues to meet the program requirements.

Revocation of certification

In rare situations, TRUE Zero Waste certification may be revoked. We've also created the GBCI [Certification Challenge Policy](#) to ensure that zero waste projects and subsequent assessments by GBCI team members are done so with integrity, accuracy and truthfulness. A certification challenge may be initiated by GBCI or by any third party within 18 months of a project's certification. We recommend that you retain all project documentation related to your certification for two years in case of a challenge. Note: in the instance a certification challenge is issued, GBCI may perform an additional site inspection.