



CERTIFICATION MAINTENANCE & RECERTIFICATION GUIDANCE

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Green Business Certification, Inc (GBCI)
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Introduction

TRUE certification was designed for facilities to define, pursue and achieve their zero waste goals. Although it may seem to be a one-time measure of achievement, GBCI believes that it is important to view engagement in zero waste as a process of *continuous improvement*. It is anticipated that TRUE projects will continue to demonstrate leadership long after they are certified in order to sustain, and even improve, human and planetary health.

This *Certification Maintenance & Recertification Guidance* was developed to provide information and policies on maintaining and enhancing TRUE certification after it has been awarded. Recertification encourages project teams to monitor their performance data and demonstrate that their facilities are performing as intended and beyond. Project teams (and others) will use this document to understand how to keep their certification current, and when and how to recertify to recognize their continued leadership. This document should be used in conjunction with the most current version of the TRUE rating system and is not applicable to events or any other projects without ongoing operations.

Annual Certification Maintenance

To maintain certification, TRUE projects are required to annually submit their most recent diversion performance data and confirm that they are still in compliance with minimum program requirements (MPRs) and previously achieved credits. This information is due by the anniversary date of certification each year and the project will receive a reminder to submit this information in advance of this date. While no additional documentation or verification will be required, GBCI reserves the right to conduct an audit and request additional documentation.

- Projects that submit information annually will receive the following benefits, in addition to maintaining their certification in good standing:
 - Priority consideration for showcasing in TRUE promotional materials, media highlights, participation in educational outreach, and speaking engagements.
 - Reduced fees for any future recertifications (see the “Recertification” section below).
- Projects that do not submit data annually will be required to pay additional fees to proceed with recertification (see the “Recertification” section below).
- Projects that can no longer meet one or more TRUE MPRs should contact GBCI describing the situation and which MPR(s) are affected. GBCI is dedicated to supporting projects with challenges, while also helping them retain the recognition they received from TRUE, and solutions may be available.
- If space is added to an existing TRUE certified facility, the original boundary of the project must be adjusted to include it. All activities in that space must also comply with previously met TRUE requirements and be included in diversion data. No further review or recertification will be required, but the project must update GBCI about the changes during or before their next annual certification maintenance submission.

Certification Validity

In addition to annual maintenance requirements, some projects may need to recertify every three years to maintain their TRUE certification. Policies on when the certification expires and how to maintain certification will differ based on when the project was registered.

Projects registered on or after September 1, 2020

TRUE certification remains valid for three years. Projects maintain certification by complying with the annual maintenance requirements, as stipulated in the preceding section, and by recertifying every three years following the process outlined in the following section. Projects that do not provide annual data for three consecutive years and do not recertify at the three year anniversary will no longer be considered certified. The project will be required to recertify by following the process and fees outlined in the following section.

Projects registered before September 1, 2020

TRUE certification has no set term of validity and no additional fees are due, as long as the project maintains certification by complying with the annual maintenance requirements stipulated in the preceding section. Certified projects that registered before September 1, 2020 and do not provide annual data for three consecutive years will no longer be considered certified. The project will be required to recertify by following the process and fees outlined in the following section.

If the project elects to recertify to increase their certification level, or after a facility move, the new certification will be valid for three years and subject to the certification validity policy for projects registered on or after September 1, 2020.

Closed facilities

Facilities that have closed and did not move to a new location will no longer be considered certified. The project should notify GBCI within sixty days of closure. Facilities that have closed but moved operations to a new site must recertify at the new site to maintain certification, following the process and fees outlined in the following section.

Recertification

Recertification is available to certified TRUE projects that would like to update their certification in the following scenarios: every three years to maintain certification, to reinstate a certification that is no longer valid, to pursue additional points to upgrade the certification level achieved, and after the facility has moved. The recertification process is the same as outlined in the TRUE rating system and process section of the [Guide to Certification](#), with some key differences outlined below.

Registration

For all types of recertification, register your project by visiting the TRUE website, sign the certification agreement, and pay the applicable fees. The fees for recertifying a project differ from the standard fees for certifying a project. Please visit the [TRUE website](#) or [contact us](#) for more information on recertification fees.

Recertification requirements and process

1. **Recertification to maintain certification status – Projects registered on or after September 1, 2020 who have reached the end of their three year validity term AND previously certified TRUE projects that have not maintained validity and want to recertify to reinstate certification (see “Certification Validity” section above).**

After registration, projects are required to complete a brief form to confirm they are still in compliance with Minimum Program Requirements (MPRs) and previously achieved credits, along with submitting diversion performance data for the most recent twelve months demonstrating 90% or greater overall annual diversion from landfill, incineration (WTE), and the environment. Supporting documentation confirming weight data values for one of those months is also required. All diversion performance information will be reviewed by GBCI and the project will be recertified.

While no additional documentation or on-site assessment verifying credit or other MPR compliance will be required, GBCI reserves the right to conduct an audit. Documentation or an on-site assessment may be requested to confirm the project is still in compliance with credits and MPRs.

2. **Recertifying to upgrade the certification level – previously certified TRUE projects that would like to increase point totals and certification level.**

GBCI encourages all projects to continuously improve by increasing diversion and enhancing their zero waste programs so that they can recertify to recognize these additional achievements. Projects must continue to meet the requirements of all MPRs and of credits previously earned that are being attempted again, along with any newly attempted credits. The process to recertify is outlined below.

Application

- Projects are required to utilize the most current version of the application form. If there is a newer version of the application form, the project will move all previous narratives and update them in the newer form.
- In the updated application form, indicate which credits are newly attempted, along with providing the required documentation for those new credits.
- MPRs and credits previously earned will be reviewed and revalidated to maintain the integrity and validity of the certification. Some documentation from the initial certification, such as policies, may not need to be resubmitted.
 - Provide updates to previously earned credits as applicable, indicating in the form which have been updated. See the “Technical guidance for upgrade and facility move recertifications” section below for more detailed guidance on what updates are required.
 - Where there are no updates, provide confirmation that the project continues to comply with the MPR or previously achieved credit.

Review

- The review timelines are the same as for a standard TRUE project. After preliminary review, and once any virtual meetings or phone interviews are complete, the project will have a set period to submit all additional documentation and updated narratives in response to the preliminary review comments. Once this is received, the final review will commence.

- o An on-site assessment will not be required. Interviews, if needed, will take place via phone or virtual meeting. The project will be expected to submit additional photographic evidence for some credits. GBCI reserves the right to conduct an on-site assessment if special circumstances necessitate it, such as an inability to validate requirements.

Post-recertification

- o If the point total changes enough to signify a new level, this will be updated in all public project listings.
- o The project team may choose to update the project profile and case study to reflect new accomplishments, as applicable.
- o The certification date/anniversary date for annual maintenance will be reset to the date recertification is issued for projects recertifying to change their level or after a move. Project teams will be expected to remain compliant with annual maintenance requirements as outlined in the "Certification Maintenance" section above.
- o The project may choose to recertify again at any time. There is no limit to the number of recertifications a project can complete to upgrade their certification level or gain more points.

3. Recertifying due to facility move – *previously certified TRUE projects that have moved to a new location.*

A previously certified TRUE project that relocates to another building or property may recertify at the new location by demonstrating that the new facility operates in the same manner as the previous location. The project must also demonstrate compliance with all MPRs and applicable credits at the new location. The project must register to recertify within sixty days of becoming fully operational at the new location. The recertification process and requirements are the same as outlined in #2 above.

Technical guidance for upgrade and facility move recertifications

MPRs and credits have varying requirements for updates upon recertification, depending on the nature of the actions that constitute the credit. Use the information below to guide the updates made.

MPRs

- MPR #4 will be automatically awarded and no new documentation is needed, as the baseline data from the previous certification will continue to be considered as the baseline year.
- To meet MPR #5, provide a narrative describing current contamination levels and types, and how it is addressed, along with completing one of the following:
 1. Conduct a waste audit and a recycling audit within the three months preceding submittal for recertification. Submit the audit results in a written report. Contamination levels meeting the required threshold must be achieved.
OR
 2. Submit letters from every applicable service provider confirming the most recent contamination levels of materials currently leaving the site. The contamination rate by weight and percentage should be included for at least the most recent month of loads of each material type. Estimates are accepted as long as the

methodology to calculate the estimates is explained. Overall hauler MRF (material recovery facility) contamination or diversion rates will not be accepted, as data on the performance of the materials from the individual project site is required.

Credits

- Credits related to policies, goals, reviews, or other one-time actions are not required to be revised or repeated, unless there are any changes or updates.
- For any credits requiring baseline data, or a comparison against a baseline, the baseline data from the original certification may be used and does not need to be resubmitted.
- For all credits regarding actions that are ongoing or periodic (annual, monthly, quarterly), provide an updated narrative, photographs and/or documentation as applicable confirming the action is still occurring or the related item is still in use.
- Provide recent photographs of all service provider bins (e.g. dumpsters, roll-offs, carts, or compactors), and the contents of those bins. If your site is large (more than five acres or five buildings), photographs of a sampling of bins will be accepted.