

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors, Massachusetts School Building Authority
FROM: James A. MacDonald, First Deputy Treasurer, Chief Executive Officer
Mary L. Pichetti, Executive Director, Deputy Chief Executive Officer
SUBJECT: Recommendation to Update the MSBA Green Schools Program Policy
DATE: April 22, 2026

Introduction

The Massachusetts School Building Authority (the “MSBA”) has reviewed information related to the latest version of the US Green Building Council’s LEED Version 5 (“LEED v5”) and the phase out of the Collaborative for High Performance Schools (“CHPS”) program that will affect the MSBA’s Green Schools Program. This memorandum recommends an update to the current MSBA Green Schools Program policy. The recommendations apply to MSBA Core Program projects seeking Project Scope and Budget approval after January 1, 2026.

Background

Since its formation in 2004, the MSBA has been an advocate of “green” sustainable building design for all MSBA-funded public K-12 school buildings and has regularly adjusted its Green Schools Program policy to promote increasing levels of energy efficiency in school design in alignment with the Commonwealth’s goals to move toward net-zero buildings. Over the years, and as codes and regulations have evolved, the MSBA has updated its Green Schools Program policy to incorporate five editions of the Massachusetts State Building Code - 780 CMR, five versions of the US Green Building Council’s LEED Building Design and Construction (“USGBC LEED-BD+C”), and six versions of the Collaborative for High Performance Schools (“CHPS”) requirements. The most recent update to the Green School Program was made at the June 21, 2023, Board of Directors meeting.

The proposed recommendations associated with the MSBA Green Schools Program policy address the USGBC’s latest version of LEED, LEED v5, which is currently available for project registration with LEED. The prior version of LEED, LEED Version 4.1 (“LEED v4.1”), remains available but is expected to close for future registrations by June 30, 2026.

Industry advancements over the last two decades have supported the efforts of school districts and designers to strive for increasingly higher levels of energy efficiency toward goals of net-zero emissions. In addition to an emphasis on increased energy efficiency and improved indoor air quality, the MSBA’s Green Schools Program policy encourages sustainable site development, efficient transportation costs, reduced water consumption, sustainable use of materials, and a higher quality educational environment. As of February 2026, the total additional MSBA investment through incentive points from the MSBA Green Schools Program policy is over \$379 million, averaging about \$1.8 million per Core Program project. To date, (185) MSBA Core Program projects have achieved final certification with the USGBC LEED-BD+C or CHPS. Within those (185) MSBA funded projects, (3) schools have achieved LEED “Platinum”, (47) schools have achieved LEED “Gold”, (59) schools have achieved LEED “Silver”, (8) schools

have achieved LEED “Certified”, (54) schools have achieved CHPS “Leader” , and (14) schools have achieved CHPS “Verified”.

Discussion

Staff have reviewed and analyzed new information that affects specific components of the MSBA Green Schools Program policy, with close attention focused on the following two items:

CHPS becoming part of USGBC

As of June 2025, the Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) is a part of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) and is no longer accepting projects for registration. Furthermore, CHPS will phase out supporting all projects that have already registered with that organization over the next two years (from June 30, 2025 to June 30, 2027). During and after this transition period, all new projects will register with USGBC to pursue LEED certification. After June 30, 2027, CHPS certifications will no longer be offered. MSBA staff recommend that the MSBA Green Schools Program policy be updated to reflect the phase-out of the CHPS certification program. The MSBA has been in contact with project consultant teams that have active projects currently registered with CHPS to assist in the final verification and closeout process and to confirm that, over the next two years, completion of their Green Schools Program goals will be met successfully.

Introduction of LEED v5

The U.S. Green Building Council has recently released LEED v5 as an update to LEED v4.1. Most notably, this update will affect the Material Resources and Indoor Air Quality components of the MSBA Green Schools Program. The MSBA is proposing an administrative reorganization of its Green Schools Program to align with LEED v5, which introduces updated sustainability priorities and credit structures. School districts have had the option to register with LEED v5 since April 28, 2025, with LEED v4/4.1 registration expected to close by June 30, 2026.

Recommendation

As presented at the Facilities Assessment Subcommittee meeting on March 11, 2026, MSBA staff recommend that the current version of the MSBA Green Schools Program policy be updated to allow the use of LEED v5 for all Core Program projects requesting Project Scope and Budget approval after January 1, 2026. The updated policy is provided in Attachment A. LEED v5 registration is currently open through USGBC. School districts may continue to register projects under LEED v4 or LEED v4.1 while those rating systems remain open for registration by USGBC. Once USGBC closes LEED v4 and LEED v4.1 to new registrations, projects will be required to register with USGBC under LEED v5. For Core Program projects that predate this policy update, districts will continue to refer to the MSBA Green Schools Program policy in effect at the time the project received Project Scope and Budget approval. The following updates to the MSBA Green Schools Program policy are proposed in response to USGBC’s introduction of LEED v5 and are described in Figures 1 and 2 below:

MSBA Green Schools Program

Figure 1: Minimum Requirements

Current Policy – Established 2023	Proposed Policy – Updated 2026
<p>Using LEED-S, for no additional reimbursement, achieve a minimum of “Silver,” including a minimum total of three points (from seven points available) from the following three categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MR Building Product Disclosure and Optimization - Material Ingredients • IEQ - Low Emitting Materials • IEQ – Indoor Air Quality Assessment <p>OR;</p> <p>Using NE-CHPS, for no additional reimbursement, achieve a minimum of “Verified”, including a minimum total of five points (from ten points available) from the following four categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQ 5.1.3 Indoor Air Quality Management – Building Flush Out • EQ 7.0 Low Emitting Materials • EQ 7.1 Additional Low Emitting Materials • MW 10.1 Health Product Information Reporting <p>AND;</p> <p>Meet the minimum energy efficiency requirements described in the MA DOER “Stretch” energy code standards.</p>	<p>Using LEED v4/4.1*, for no additional reimbursement, achieve a minimum of “Silver,” including a minimum total of three points (from seven points available) from the following three categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MR Building Product Disclosure and Optimization - Material Ingredients • IEQ - Low Emitting Materials • IEQ – Indoor Air Quality Assessment <p>OR;</p> <p>Using LEED v5 for no additional reimbursement, achieve a minimum of “Silver,” including a minimum total of three points (from ten points available) from the following four categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRc3 – Low-Emitting Materials • MRc4 – Building Product Selection and Procurement • EQc1 – Enhanced Air Quality • EQc5 – Air Quality Testing and Monitoring <p>AND;</p> <p>Meet the minimum energy efficiency requirements described in the MA DOER “Stretch” energy code standards.</p>

Figure 2: Additional Reimbursement

Current Policy – Established 2023	Proposed Policy - Update 2026
<p>For an additional reimbursement of 3% of the Estimated Basis of Total Facilities Grant, and in addition to the minimum requirements described above, projects must meet the minimum energy efficiency requirements described in the MA DOER “Specialized” energy code standards.</p> <p>For an additional reimbursement of 1% of the Estimated Basis of Total Facilities Grant, and in addition to the minimum requirements described above, projects must achieve a minimum total of five points (from seven points available) in the LEED indoor air quality points noted above, or a minimum total of eight points (from ten points available) in the NE-CHPS indoor air quality points noted above.</p>	<p>For an additional reimbursement of 3% of the Estimated Basis of Total Facilities Grant, and in addition to the minimum requirements described above, projects must meet the minimum energy efficiency requirements described in the MA DOER “Specialized” energy code standards.</p> <p>For an additional reimbursement of 1% of the Estimated Basis of Total Facilities Grant, and in addition to the minimum requirements described above, projects must achieve a minimum total of five points (from seven points available) in the LEED v4/4.1* indoor air quality points noted above, or a minimum total of five points (from ten points available) in the LEED v5 indoor air quality points noted above.</p>

** LEED v4/4.1 registration is subject to the transition timeline established by USGBC. The MSBA will recognize projects registered under LEED v4/4.1 while those rating systems remain open.*

Attachment A

MSBA Green Schools Program Policy – Updated April 2026

The MSBA Green Schools Program awards provisional incentives to school districts within the Core Program to increase the energy efficiency and sustainability for new construction and major renovation/addition projects, by meeting the new “Specialized” energy code and for exceeding MSBA minimum standards for indoor air quality.

Minimum Requirements	Additional Reimbursement
<p>Using LEED v4/4.1*, for no additional reimbursement, achieve a minimum of “Silver,” including a minimum total of three points (from seven points available) from the following three categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MR Building Product Disclosure and Optimization - Material Ingredients • IEQ - Low Emitting Materials • IEQ – Indoor Air Quality Assessment <p>OR;</p> <p>Using LEED v5 for no additional reimbursement, achieve a minimum of “Silver,” including a minimum total of three points (from ten points available) from the following four categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRc3 – Low-Emitting Materials • MRc4 – Building Product Selection and Procurement • EQc1 – Enhanced Air Quality • EQc5 – Air Quality Testing and Monitoring <p>AND;</p> <p>Meet the minimum energy efficiency requirements described in the MA DOER “Stretch” energy code standards.</p>	<p>For an additional reimbursement of 3% of the Estimated Basis of Total Facilities Grant, and in addition to the minimum requirements described here, projects must meet the minimum energy efficiency requirements described in the MA DOER “Specialized” energy code standards.</p> <p>For an additional reimbursement of 1% of the Estimated Basis of Total Facilities Grant, and in addition to the minimum requirements described here, projects must achieve a minimum total of five points (from seven points available) using LEED v4/4.1* indoor air quality points noted here OR; a minimum of five points (from ten points available) using LEED v5 indoor air quality points noted here.</p>

** LEED v4/4.1 will remain an option until further notice from USGBC. The MSBA will recognize v4/4.1 until USGBC closes v4/4.1 and will only recognize registration with v5 thereafter.*

MSBA Green Schools Program Policy Implementation

For Core Program projects that predate this policy update, refer to the MSBA Green Schools Program policies in effect at the time the project received Project Scope and Budget approval. This policy update applies to MSBA Core Program projects seeking Project Scope and Budget approval after January 1, 2026.

For projects that have been approved by the MSBA Board of Directors and consist of a scope of work limited to base repair and/or minor renovations or additions relative to the size of the overall existing building, the MSBA recognizes that meeting energy efficiency standards intended for major renovation and/or new construction projects may not be feasible. It remains

the responsibility of the school district and the design professionals, in conjunction with the local authorities having jurisdiction, to determine the minimum energy efficiency requirements for projects consisting of a scope of work other than that of a major renovation and/or new construction. Therefore, the MSBA, at its sole discretion and after review and consideration, may allow a Core Program project for base repair, minor renovation, and/or a small addition to proceed and receive MSBA participation without meeting the minimum requirements of the MSBA Green Schools Program, but such a project will not be eligible to receive incentive points associated with the MSBA Green Schools Program policy.

As with previous versions of the MSBA Green Schools Program policies, incentive points awarded by the MSBA are provisional, subject to the school district meeting certain sustainability requirements for the project. If a school district does not meet these requirements, the school district will not qualify for these incentive points, and the MSBA will adjust the reimbursement rate accordingly.