

VA SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS PROGRAM

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** This directive prescribes the goals, policies, roles and responsibilities, and major requirements for Administration and Staff Office sustainable buildings management and reporting within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).
2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This revised directive updates and streamlines principles, policies, responsibilities and other key elements necessary to facilitate the continual improvement of VA's sustainable building management.
 - a. Roles and responsibilities have been consolidated and focused on top level management driven implementation of the directive.
 - b. The unnecessary policies in the rescinded directives 0056, 0066 and handbook 0056 have been removed from this directive as appropriate.
3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Office of Asset Enterprise Management (044), Office of the Assistant Secretary for Management and Chief Financial Officer.
4. **RELATED HANDBOOK/DIRECTIVE:** None.
5. **RESCISSIONS:** VA Directive 0056, VA Sustainable Buildings Program, dated October 11, 2012. VA Handbook 0056, VA Sustainable Buildings Program, dated October 11, 2012. VA Directive 0066, VA Sustainable Locations Program, dated June 29, 2012.

CERTIFIED BY:

/s/
Dat P. Tran
Acting Assistant Secretary
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**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

/s/
Jon J. Rychalski
Assistant Secretary for Management
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VA SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS PROGRAM

1. **PURPOSE.** This directive revises policies and responsibilities for implementation of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Sustainable Buildings Program. It provides guidance to comply with Federal sustainable building mandates and achieve VA-specific sustainable building goals.
2. **POLICY.** It is VA policy to create and maintain sustainable buildings commensurate with Federal laws, regulations, Presidential executive orders, and other guidance. They are also subject to mission requirements.
 - a. **Scope.** This directive applies to existing VA-owned and leased facilities included in the VA capital asset building inventory and to the Administrations and Staff Offices that manage them. It also covers new construction and major renovation projects, minor construction projects, and non-recurring maintenance (NRM) projects. The directive provides policies to which all Administrations and Staff Offices must adhere to comply with Federal sustainable building mandates and achieve VA-specific goals. It addresses sustainable building goals, standards, validation and certification, and reporting.
 - b. **New Construction and Major Renovation Projects.**
 - (1) **Requirements.** Each new construction and major renovation project shall meet the latest version of the *Guiding Principles for Sustainable Federal Buildings* (Guiding Principles) or achieve sustainable building certification via a Department of Energy (DOE) approved third party system. Links to applicable documents and guidance are available on the [VA Sustainable Buildings SharePoint site](#), which can be found at <https://vawww.vashare.vaco.va.gov/sites/sustainablebuildings/SitePages/Home.aspx>. New construction and major renovation projects shall follow the requirements of the [VA Sustainable Design Manual](#), which can be found at <https://www.cfm.va.gov/til/sustain.asp>. Additionally, the following requirements apply:
 - (a) Apply sustainable design principles to siting, design and construction of buildings under the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (EISA § 433).
 - (b) Ensure major replacements of installed equipment, renovation or expansion of existing space employs the most energy efficient designs, systems, equipment and controls that are life-cycle cost-effective (EISA § 434).
 - (c) Reduce fossil-fuel generated energy consumption in new buildings and major renovation projects 100% by 2030, compared to a 2003 baseline (EISA § 433).

- (d) Ensure new buildings are designed to achieve energy consumption levels that are at least 30% below the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) standard 90.1 if life-cycle cost-effective (10 CFR Part 433.100).

(2) **Certification.** Certification for compliance with the current Guiding Principles may be achieved through VA internal certification or through a third party. Procedures for complying with the Guiding Principles can be found on the [VA Sustainable Buildings SharePoint site](#). Guidance for obtaining sustainable building certification via a DOE approved third party can also be found on the SharePoint site.

c. **Leases.**

(1) **Requirements.** The Guiding Principles currently do not apply to leases. All VA leases must follow U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) standards, which include sustainable design elements. Per EISA § 435, building leases must be made only for Energy Star-certified buildings with the following exceptions:

- (a) No space is available in a building described in subsection (a) of the EISA Section 435 that meets the functional requirements of an agency, including locational needs.
- (b) The agency proposes to remain in a building that the agency has occupied previously.
- (c) The agency proposes to lease a building of historical, architectural, or cultural significance (as defined in 40 U.S.C. § 3306(a)(4)) or space in such a building; or,
- (d) The lease is for not more than 10,000 gross square feet of space.

(2) **Budget.** Administrations and Staff Offices shall request sufficient funding to meet the requirements of this directive as a part of budgeted lease costs.

d. **Existing VA-Owned Buildings.**

(1) **Requirement.** Existing VA-owned buildings are encouraged to achieve the standards of the Guiding Principles certification or sustainable building certification via a DOE approved third party system. Agency targets are listed on the [VA Sustainable Buildings SharePoint site](#).

(2) **Certification.** VA internal certification of sustainable buildings may be achieved through procedures found on the [VA Sustainable Buildings SharePoint site](#). If internal certification is achieved, third party certification is not required but may be pursued as an option. Buildings that were

certified using the 2008 Guiding Principles are grandfathered through 2025 if they meet the sixth guiding principle for climate change that was added in the 2016 version and other ongoing requirements.

- (3) **Reporting.** Administrations and Staff Offices that manage existing VA-owned buildings shall provide sustainable building data to Office of Asset Enterprise Management (OAEM) as requested. OAEM is responsible for external agency-level sustainable buildings reporting.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES.

- a. **Assistant Secretary for Management and Chief Financial Officer** shall: advise the Secretary on all sustainable buildings-related matters and provide general guidance to the CSO in implementing this directive.
- b. **Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries and Other Key Officials** shall:
 - (1) Ensure that their annual Strategic Capital Investment Planning (SCIP) submissions meet targets set within SCIP for sustainable buildings and for ensuring that the sustainability status of individual buildings is present and accurate in the VA Capital Asset Inventory database, which is maintained by the OAEM.
 - (2) Ensure compliance with sustainable building requirements in the Federal laws, sustainable buildings mandates, and Executive Orders identified in Section 5.a. References below. They shall also comply with reporting requirements, mandate the centralized staff training resources listed at the VA Sustainable Buildings SharePoint site, and request funding to meet the requirements of this directive.
 - (3) Update sustainability data annually for each facility for the Federal Real Property Profile (FRPP) reporting. Instructions may be found on the [VA Sustainable Buildings SharePoint site](#).
 - (4) Ensure that officials who manage building projects report compliance and other requested data to OAEM, which is required for external agency-level sustainable buildings reporting.
 - (5) Request funding to meet the requirements of this directive as a part of budgeted project costs annually.
- c. **Executive Director, Office of Management, Office of Asset Enterprise Management** shall:
 - (1) Provide program leadership and guidance associated with implementation of the VA Sustainable Buildings Program including, establishing policies and procedures; reviewing documents in coordination with the Administrations and Staff Offices; ensuring accurate reporting and proper

documentation; and coordinating with other Federal and non-Federal entities.

- (2) Submitting sustainable building-related reports as required to the DOE, the Office of Management and Budget, the White House Council on Environmental Quality, and other entities. OAEM provides the final approval for internal certification through a process detailed on the [VA Sustainable Buildings SharePoint site](#).
 - (3) Serve as the Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) for VA.
- d. **Executive Director, Office of Acquisition, Logistics and Construction, Office of Construction and Facilities Management** shall:
- (1) Update and maintain sustainable building design standards and ensuring that new construction projects meet those standards.
 - (2) Implement the policies and goals of this directive, comply with OAEM request for data, provide staff training, update VA master specifications and VA design standards to ensure consistency with this directive and applicable Presidential executive orders, and request sufficient funding to meet the requirements of this directive.

4. DEFINITIONS.

- a. **2020 Guiding Principles for Sustainable Federal Buildings.** The Guiding Principles provide six principles for certifying Federal buildings as sustainable. The six principles are: 1) employ integrated design; 2) optimize energy performance; 3) protect and conserve water; 4) enhance indoor environmental quality; 5) reduce environmental impact of materials; and 6) assess and consider building resilience. These guiding principles can be found in Council for Environmental Quality (CEQ), 2020 Guiding Principles document.
- b. **New Construction.** Major construction projects, minor construction projects, NRM projects, and any other VA projects that have any new building construction in the work scope shall comply with the VA Sustainable Design manual.
- c. **Major Renovation.** Major renovations include changes to a building that provide significant opportunities for substantial improvement in energy efficiency. This may include but is not limited to, replacement of heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, lighting systems, the building envelope, and other components of the building that have a major impact on energy usage. Major renovation also includes a renovation of any kind with a cost exceeding 25 percent of the replacement value of the building, shall comply with the VA Sustainable Design manual.

5. REFERENCES.

- a. Laws, regulations, and Presidential executive orders regarding sustainable Federal buildings include the following:
 - (1) [Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007](#) (Public Law 110-114, 11-9-2007).
 - (2) [2020 Guiding Principles for Sustainable Federal Buildings](#) (December 2020).
 - (3) [Executive Order 13834, Efficient Federal Operations](#) (May 17, 2018).
 - (4) https://www.sustainability.gov/pdfs/eo13834_instructions.pdf (April 2019).
- b. Internal VA documents relating to sustainable Federal buildings include the following:
 - (1) [VA Sustainable Design Manual](#)
 - (2) [VA Sustainable Buildings SharePoint Site](#)
 - (3) VA [Directive](#) 0011 Strategic Capital Investment Planning Process, dated August 8, 2011.
- c. When determining strategies for achieving sustainable Federal buildings, the following resources may be helpful:
 - (1) [Resources for Implementing Executive Order 13834 for Efficient Federal Operations](#) (May 2018).
 - (2) [Interagency Sustainability Working Group](#)
 - (3) [DOE Commercial Buildings](#)
 - (4) [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\) ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager](#)
 - (5) [Sustainable Facilities Tool](#)
 - (6) [Whole Building Design Guide](#)