

Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, DC 20420

VA DIRECTIVE 0056
Transmittal Sheet
October 11, 2012

VA SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS PROGRAM

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE.** To establish the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Sustainable Building Program policies.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES.** This directive sets forth policies and responsibilities for implementing the VA Sustainable Buildings Program, to comply with Federal sustainable building requirements, maintain sustainable and high performance buildings, and meet internal sustainable building goals.
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE.** Assistant Secretary for Management (004), Office of Asset Enterprise Management (044), Green Management Programs Service (044E).
- 4. RELATED HANDBOOK.** VA Handbook 0056, VA Sustainable Buildings Program
- 5. RESCISSIONS.** None

CERTIFIED BY:

/s/
Roger W. Baker
Assistant Secretary for
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**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

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Distribution: Electronic only

VA SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS PROGRAM

1. PURPOSE

a. This directive establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Sustainable Buildings Program (VASBP) policies, to comply with Federal sustainable building requirements, to maintain sustainable and high performance buildings, and to meet internal sustainable building goals. The directive addresses sustainable building goals, standards, validation and certification, reporting, and budgeting; it also outlines management tools that the Administrations and staff offices may use in pursuit of VA's sustainable building goals.

b. This directive applies to all facilities included in the VA capital asset building inventory and the Administrations and staff offices that manage them. It sets forth Department-wide sustainable building direction for new building construction, major renovations, major construction, minor construction, non-recurring maintenance (NRM) projects, and existing buildings. It applies to all VA facilities, including VA-owned and VA-leased buildings.

2. POLICY

a. **General.** The VASBP provides common procedures and standards by which all Administrations and staff offices may comply with Federal sustainable building mandates and internal VA goals. The program directs compliance with all aspects of the *Guiding Principles for Federal Leadership in High Performance and Sustainable Buildings* (Guiding Principles) as interpreted by the most recent version of the *High Performance and Sustainable Buildings Guidance* (produced by the Interagency Sustainability Working Group). These requirements are further defined in the *VA Sustainable Buildings Handbook*. All Guiding Principles shall be met unless doing so would prohibit achieving accreditation from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. Through development and implementation of a Sustainable Building Implementation Plan (SBIP), VA intends to exceed all sustainable building related Federal mandates and internal goals.

b. **Guiding Principles.** The Guiding Principles are fully described in Appendix A of Handbook 0056, VA Sustainable Buildings Program. The five Guiding Principles are:

- (1) Employ Integrated Design, Assessment, Operation, and Management Principles;
- (2) Optimize Energy Performance;
- (3) Protect and Conserve Water;
- (4) Enhance Indoor Environmental Quality; and
- (5) Reduce Environmental Impact of Materials.

b. New Construction and Major Renovation

(1) **Requirement.** Executive Order 13423 Section 2.f.i and Executive Order 13514 Section 2.g.iii require that "...all new construction, major renovation, or repair and alteration of Federal buildings complies with the Guiding Principles." This requirement incorporates new building construction, major renovations, major construction, minor construction, NRM projects, and existing buildings. It applies to all VA facilities, including VA-owned and VA-leased buildings. This requirement applies to all projects where the design contract was awarded after October

1, 2008. If a design contract was awarded prior to fiscal year 2008, the Office of Asset Enterprise Management (OAEM) must be notified to coordinate sustainability requirements.

(2) Standards. Administrations and staff offices that manage the new construction or major renovation projects may develop, maintain, and make available electronically a sustainable building design standard for their organization. An electronic copy of each standard shall be accessible through the VA Technical Information Library (<http://www.cfm.va.gov/til/>) for the use of all other new construction and major renovation projects. The standards shall include (but not be limited to) the Guiding Principles as interpreted by the most recent version of the *High Performance and Sustainable Buildings Guidance*. Administrations and staff offices shall coordinate the development and subsequent changes to the standards with OAEM. VA master specifications and VA design standards shall incorporate the sustainability standards.

(3) Validation and Certification. Each new construction and major renovation project shall meet the Guiding Principles. Third-party green building certification, including the credits identified by VA as meeting the Guiding Principles, will be required to verify compliance. The sustainable building design standards shall include guidance on the use of third-party certification. This requirement applies to all new construction and major renovation projects.

(4) Reporting. Administrations and staff offices that manage projects shall report compliance and other requested data to OAEM. Data elements, formats, schedules, and systems for sustainable building reports shall be coordinated with OAEM. OAEM is responsible for external sustainability reports.

(5) Budget. Administrations and staff offices are to request sustainable development and certification funding sufficient to meet the requirements of this directive as a part of the budgeted project costs.

c. Major and Minor Leases

(1) Requirements

(a) Executive Order 13514 Section 2.g.iii requires that “at least 15% of [VA’s] existing buildings (above 5,000 gross square feet) and building leases (above 5,000 gross square feet) meet the Guiding Principles by fiscal year 2015 and that the agency makes annual progress toward 100-percent conformance with the Guiding Principles for its building inventory.”

(b) Section 435 of the Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA) of 2007 mandates that no Federal agency enter into a leasing contract on or after December 19, 2010, for a building that has not earned the Energy Star label in the most recent year, unless the space requirement is in compliance with specific exemptions provided in the EISA statute. Those four exemptions are:

1. No space is offered in a building with an Energy Star label in the delineated area that meets the functional requirements of an agency, including location needs;

2. The agency will remain in a building they currently occupy;

3. The lease will be in a building of historical, architectural, or cultural significance verified by listing or eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places; or

4. The lease is for 10,000 rentable square feet or less.

The EISA Section 435 requirement does not apply to space types for which the Environmental Protection Agency does not issue Energy Star labels (e.g. land, parking garages).

(2) Standards. The Administrations and staff offices that manage major and minor leases shall include these requirements in Solicitations for Offers and other leasing documents. They may develop, maintain, and make available electronically sustainability language for leases for their organization. Administrations and staff offices shall coordinate with OAEM the development and subsequent changes to guidance documents.

(3) Validation and Certifications. VA leased buildings can be considered compliant with the Guiding Principles when one of the following options is met:

(a) Administration or staff offices can demonstrate that the lease is compliant with each of the Guiding Principles for Existing Buildings, or

(b) At any point in the last five years, the building has been third-party certified to meet the requirements of a multi-attribute green building standard or rating system.

(4) Reporting. Administrations and staff offices that manage VA leases shall provide sustainable building data to OAEM. Data elements, formats, schedules, and systems for sustainable building reports must be coordinated with OAEM. OAEM is responsible for external sustainability reports.

(5) Budget. Administrations and staff offices are directed to procure the necessary funding to meet the requirements of this directive.

d. Existing Buildings

(1) Requirement. Executive Order 13514 Section 2.g.iii requires that “at least 15% of [VA’s] existing buildings (above 5,000 gross square feet) and building leases (above 5,000 gross square feet) meet the Guiding Principles by fiscal year 2015 and that the agency makes annual progress toward 100-percent conformance with the Guiding Principles for its building inventory.”

(2) Standards. The Administrations and staff offices that manage existing buildings shall develop, maintain and make available electronically, a sustainability Guidebook for existing buildings for their organization. An electronic copy of each Guidebook shall be accessible through <http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/> for VBA buildings, and <http://vaww.ceosh.med.va.gov/Guidebooks> for all other buildings. The Guidebooks shall include (but are not limited to) the Guiding Principles Existing for existing buildings. Administrations and staff offices shall coordinate with OAEM the development and subsequent changes to the Guidebooks. All existing buildings shall comply with the relevant Guidebook when cost effective.

(3) Validation and Certifications. All existing buildings selected by the VA Green Building Advisory Council (VA GBAC) for sustainable building practices shall meet the Guiding Principles. This may be accomplished by ensuring that each of the Guiding Principles are met and by obtaining third party green building certification (see the Responsibilities section for details on VA GBAC).

(4) Reporting. The Administrations and staff offices that manage existing VA-owned and VA-leased buildings shall provide sustainable building data to OAEM. Data elements, formats, schedules, and systems for sustainable building reports must be coordinated with OAEM. OAEM is responsible for external sustainability reports.

(5) Budget. Administrations and staff offices are directed to procure the necessary funding to ensure sustainable building development to meet the requirements of this directive.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. Office of Asset Enterprise Management (OAEM). The office is located within the Office of Management, and is designated to provide program leadership and guidance associated with implementation of the VASBP. Responsibilities of OAEM include: establishing policies and procedures, reviewing documents in coordination with the Administrations and staff offices, leading the VA GBAC, ensuring accurate reporting and proper documentation, and coordinating with other Federal and non-Federal entities. OAEM also identifies updates to the Sustainability section of the annually-issued OAEM (044D) "Capital Asset Inventory Update Call Memo." The Capital Asset Inventory (CAI) is the repository of VA Real Property data and identifies which buildings and leases have been determined to be sustainable. OAEM is responsible for submitting sustainable building-related reports as required to the Department of Energy, the President, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the White House Council on Environmental Quality, Congress, and other entities.

b. The Director of OAEM. The Director is designated as the Senior Sustainability Officer for VA and is responsible for Department-wide sustainable building policy and oversight of the VASBP. The Director is responsible for ensuring the development and implementation of a VA SBIP via a Department-wide VA GBAC.

c. Administrations and Staff Offices

(1) All Administrations are responsible for ensuring that their annual Strategic Capital Investment Planning (SCIP) submissions, which include a 10-year horizon of projects, meet sustainability goals for their facilities.

(2) Office of Construction and Facilities Management (OCFM). The office is responsible for updating and maintaining sustainability standards certifications, and validations, and ensuring that major projects meet sustainability standards. OCFM shall comply with reporting requirements, provide staff training, update VA master specifications and VA design standards to ensure compliance with sustainability standards, and request sufficient budgets to meet the requirements of this directive for all major leases, major construction, and major renovation projects.

(3) Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). VBA is responsible for compliance with sustainability requirements and updating and maintaining standards, certification and validation, and ensuring that VBA's new building construction and renovation projects, leases, and existing VBA buildings meet sustainability standards. VBA shall comply with reporting requirements, provide staff training, and request sufficient budgets to meet the requirements of this directive for all leases, major construction, and major renovation projects.

(4) National Cemetery Administration (NCA). NCA is responsible for compliance with sustainability requirements and updating and maintaining standards, certification and validation, and ensuring that NCA's new building construction, renovation projects, leases, and existing NCA buildings meet sustainability standards. NCA shall comply with reporting requirements, provide staff training, and request sufficient budgets to meet the requirements of this directive for all leases, major construction, and major renovation projects.

(5) Veterans Health Administration (VHA). VHA is responsible for compliance with sustainability requirements and updating and maintaining standards, certification and validation, and ensuring major leases, minor leases, and existing VHA buildings meet sustainability standards. VHA shall comply with reporting requirements, provide staff training, and request sufficient budgets to meet the requirements of this directive for all leases, major construction, and major renovation projects.

d. VA Green Building Advisory Council (VA GBAC). The council is responsible for ensuring VA SBIP compliance with all the Federal sustainable building requirements and internal goals. VA GBAC also ensures that the VA sustainable building design standards and the VA sustainability guidebooks for existing buildings comply with all Federal sustainable building requirements and internal goals. Other duties include prioritizing the list of existing facilities to obtain certifications based on available information (e.g., Energy Star ratings, sustainability survey results) and conducting an annual sustainability survey.

4. MANAGEMENT TOOLS

a. VA Sustainable Buildings Program Handbook 0056. Prescribes the objectives, targets, strategies and tools for the Administrations and staff offices to implement and maintain sustainable building design and high performance buildings.

b. VA Sustainable Building Implementation Plan. Supplements the VA Green Building Action Plan that serves as a blueprint for VA actions to achieve sustainable building goals, and provides elements identified in OMB's guidance through the sustainable building score cards reporting process and any other applicable Federal sustainable building requirements.

c. VA Green Buildings Advisory Council (VA GBAC). Comprised of Administration and key staff office members who provide advice, coordination, and recommendations related to the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on Federal Leadership in High Performance and Sustainable Building.

d. Facility and VISN Energy and Green Environmental Management System (GEMS) Managers. Energy and environmental compliance experts assigned to each VA facility and VISN.

- e. **VA Sustainable Building Design Standards.** Design standards developed by the Administrations and staff offices to comply with Federal sustainability requirements for VA projects.
- f. **VA Sustainable Building Guidebooks.** Standards developed by the Administrations and staff offices to comply with Federal sustainability requirements for existing buildings.
- g. **VA Green Building Action Plan.** Established to implement the Memorandum of Understanding on Federal Leadership in High Performance and Sustainable Buildings. It was signed by the Assistant Secretary for Management on February 28, 2006.
- h. **Department-wide Sustainability Survey.** Set of survey questions based on Guiding Principles and results of third party certification audits to estimate the level of sustainability for each facility.
- i. **Energy Star Portfolio Manager.** Interactive energy management tool that allows VA to track and assess energy and water consumption across VA's entire portfolio of buildings in a secure online environment.
- j. **VA Energy Management Action Plan.** Established for VA to meet the Federal energy mandates, via Secretarial memorandum.
- k. **Whole Building Design Guide (WBDG).** Web-based portal providing government and industry practitioners with one-stop access to up-to-date information on a wide range of building-related guidance, criteria and technology from a 'whole buildings' perspective. VA information in the WBDG is coordinated through OCFM.

5. REFERENCES

- a. Federal laws, regulations, and goals regarding sustainable and high performance buildings include the following:

(1) Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (Public Law 110-114, 11-9-2007)
http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ114.110.pdf

(2) Federal Leadership in High Performance and Sustainable Buildings Memorandum of Understanding, <http://www.wbdg.org/references/mou.php>

(3) Executive Order 13423, "Strengthening Federal Environmental, Energy and Transportation Management," http://www.wbdg.org/ccb/browse_doc.php?d=7707

(4) Executive Order 132514, "Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance," http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/2009fedleader_eo_rel.pdf

- b. Internal VA documents relating to sustainable and high performance buildings include the following:

- (1) VA Sustainable Building Implementation Plan;
- (2) VA Sustainability Guidebooks;
- (3) VA Sustainability Building Design Standards;
- (4) VA Green Building Action Plan, <http://www.cfm.va.gov/til/sustain.asp>;
- (5) VA Sustainable Design and Energy Reduction Manual, <http://www.cfm.va.gov/til/sustain.asp>;

c. When determining strategies for achieving sustainable and high performance buildings, the following resources should be considered:

- (1) Interagency Sustainability Working Group, http://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/program/sustainable_workinggroup.html;
- (2) DOE's Commercial Building Initiative, http://www.eere.energy.gov/buildings/commercial_initiative/;
- (3) DOE's Business Case for Sustainable Design in Federal Facilities, <http://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/pdfs/bcsddoc.pdf>;
- (4) Federal Green Construction Guide for Specifiers, <http://www.wbdg.org/design/greenspec.php>;
- (5) Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager, <https://www.energystar.gov/istar/pmpam/index.cfm>;
- (6) US Green Building Council (USGBC)'s LEED third-party green building certification, <http://www.usgbc.org>;
- (7) Green Building Initiative (GBI)'s Green Globes third-party green building certification, <http://www.thegbi.org>;
- (8) Whole Building Design Guide, <http://www.wbdg.org/>;
- (9) Technical Guidance for Implementing the Guiding Principles for Federal Leadership in High Performance and Sustainable Buildings, http://www.wbdg.org/references/sustainable_eo.php;
- (10) High Performance and Sustainable Building Guidance, http://www.wbdg.org/pdfs/hpsb_guidance.pdf.

6. DEFINITIONS

- a. Guiding Principles for Sustainable Existing Buildings.** Set forth in the *MOU for Federal Leadership in High Performance and Sustainable Buildings* and the related *High Performance and Sustainable Buildings Guidance*, five principles are: employ integrated assessment, operation, and management principles; optimize energy performance; protect and conserve water; enhance indoor environmental quality; and reduce environmental impact of materials.
- b. Guiding Principles for Sustainable New Construction and Major Renovation.** Originally set forth in the *MOU for Federal Leadership in High Performance and Sustainable Buildings* and updated in the *High Performance and Sustainable Buildings Guidance*, five principles are: employ integrated design principles; optimize energy performance; protect and conserve water; enhance indoor environmental quality; and reduce environmental impact of materials.
- c. New Construction.** Any VA projects including leases, major construction (\$10 million or higher) projects, minor construction projects, non-recurring maintenance projects, and any other projects that have any new building construction in the work scope.
- d. Major Renovation.** Changes to a building that provide significant opportunities for substantial improvement in energy efficiency. This may include, but is not limited to, replacement of the HVAC system, the lighting system, 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.
- e. Third-Party Certification.** Independent verification that a building meets sustainable design and construction requirements.