



LEED and WELL - Our Top 10 Questions Answered

LEED® and WELL™ are often part of the same project discussions around sustainability and building performance, but they are not interchangeable. Each addresses a different set of priorities and requires different inputs from project teams. LEED is generally used to address environmental performance across areas such as energy, water, materials, and carbon, while WELL focuses on occupant conditions and how a building supports health, comfort, and experience in use.

That distinction affects design decisions, product selection, documentation, testing, and project coordination. It also affects how teams evaluate compliance pathways, performance targets, and the technical data needed to support project goals. Projects are more likely to stay on track when those goals are defined early and supported with the right technical information.

This article is part of Intertek's 10-Question Series, which answers common questions we receive about LEED and WELL.

1. Are LEED and WELL the same?

No. LEED focuses on environmental performance, including energy, water, materials, and building efficiency. WELL focuses on occupant conditions, including air, water, light, thermal comfort, acoustics, and other factors tied to health and well-being. The new LEED v5 places added emphasis on decarbonization, quality of life, and ecological conservation and restoration, while WELL continues to focus on health outcomes supported by documentation and performance verification. They do overlap, as LEED includes an indoor environmental quality category that addresses several of the occupant health

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and wellness issues covered in greater depth in WELL.

2. Are LEED and WELL code requirements?

No. Both are voluntary frameworks, not building codes. That said, they are often written into owner requirements, institutional standards, funding criteria, or ESG goals, which can make them function as required project benchmarks. LEED and WELL should be treated as project frameworks with their own documentation and verification paths, not as substitutes for code compliance.

3. Can a project pursue both LEED and WELL?

Yes. Many projects pursue both because they address different aspects of building performance. LEED supports goals tied to carbon, efficiency, and resource use, while WELL addresses indoor environmental quality and occupant experience. Some strategies may support both, but the documentation and proof required are not always the same. The LEED/WELL Crosswalk program helps project teams pursuing both certifications, streamline



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documentation, avoid duplicated work, and understand where credits/features overlap or can substitute for one another.

4. When should LEED and WELL be addressed?

Early in design. Decisions involving the building enclosure, HVAC, lighting, plumbing, materials, and interior conditions, including design and function, can affect both frameworks. LEED v5 also places greater emphasis on early goal-setting through integrative process work, including measurable goals tied to decarbonization, resilience, and ecological outcomes. Waiting too long can lead to redesign, specification conflicts, or documentation gaps.

5. How do LEED and WELL affect product selection?

Both influence what materials get specified, but in different ways. Teams may need product data, emissions information, and performance results to support credits. In practice, that can include low-emitting material data, environmental product declarations, and health-related disclosures. LEED's low-emitting materials pathway is one example of how technical product documentation becomes central to compliance. The new Common Materials Framework (CMF) included in LEED v5 consolidates and provides weightings to the multiple attributes and certifications that define healthy and sustainable materials.

6. What role does testing play?

Testing supports verification that the conditions specified in each program are met. Projects often rely on third-party testing of materials to confirm emissions and product performance. WELL goes further by requiring performance verification of projects to confirm that strategies have been implemented and are performing as intended. That moves the focus from design intent to measured results.

7. Do LEED and WELL affect construction and installation?

Yes. Installation methods, sequencing, material storage, and indoor air quality practices can all affect outcomes. Even when the right products are specified, poor handling or late substitutions can create problems for documentation or performance targets. Some projects also include post-installation testing, especially when indoor environmental quality is a major project goal.

8. Where do teams usually run into problems?

Coordination is often the biggest issue. Problems start when

sustainability or wellness goals are treated as late-stage add-ons instead of project requirements that affect design, submittals, procurement, and execution. Teams also run into trouble when they assume one set of documents will satisfy every objective. LEED documentation and WELL performance verification do not always align one-to-one.

9. How do teams decide whether to pursue LEED, WELL, or both?

Start with the project goals and the owner's priorities. If the focus is on decarbonization and efficiency, LEED may be favorable. If the focus is on occupant well-being and measured performance in use, WELL may take the lead. Many projects pursue both to address environmental performance and occupant experience within a broader high-performance building strategy.

10. How does Intertek support LEED and WELL projects?

Intertek supports teams with testing, certification, and technical services that align products with project requirements. This includes emissions testing, product performance data, and documentation support. On projects with LEED or WELL goals, third-party data can help turn a general sustainability claim into a usable compliance path. Intertek also provides testing and verification of completed projects, including building enclosure commissioning, and testing for air quality, water quality, and acoustics.

LEED and WELL address different parts of building performance, but they often appear on the same projects. When teams understand how they differ and where they overlap, they are better positioned to avoid delays and support project goals with stronger technical documentation.

[Click here](#) to learn how Intertek supports building and construction teams with testing, certification, and technical services.

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