

Green Star Communities

Draft tool scoping paper



green building council australia



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Introduction

This document is a draft scoping paper for the Green Star - Communities rating tool. It identifies a range of attributes the proposed rating tool may have, and provides information about the Stage 2 rating tool development process.

The contents of this paper are the result of more than 12 months of industry consultation by the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA). The extent and outcomes of this consultation are outlined in the Stage 1 Green Star Communities Consultation Report which can be downloaded from the GBCA website. Consultation included industry discussions, national conference presentations, stakeholder workshops, meetings and briefings.

Many attributes of the rating tool scope are yet to be resolved and the content of this Draft Tool Scoping Paper will evolve as the tool development progresses. The rating tool attributes described within this paper are draft only and are subject to further review and amendment by the GBCA.

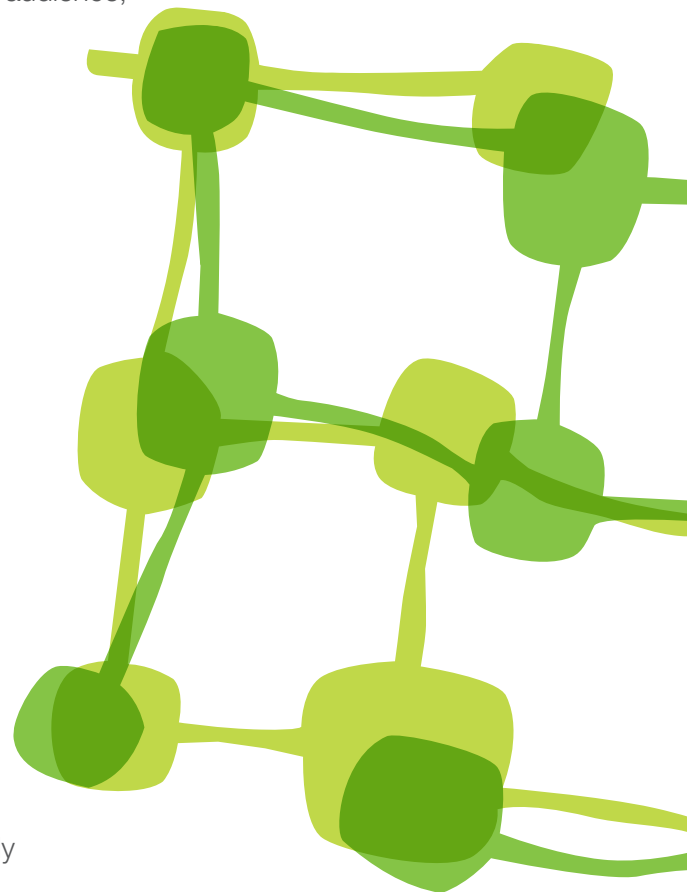
It is anticipated that a final tool scoping paper will be released early in Stage 2. This draft paper provides information about:

- The objective of the Green Star – Communities rating tool;
- The primary users of the rating tool, and broader industry audience;
- Key attributes of the rating tool;
- How existing tools in the market will be addressed; and
- Key steps in moving forward into Stage 2

Objectives of the rating tool

Stakeholder feedback has identified that the underpinning objective of the Green Star - Communities rating tool should be to help industry achieve best practice in community development projects.

Green Star – Communities will establish best practice sustainability standards for development projects and allow proponents to have their projects assessed and independently verified by a third party.



Users of the rating tool

Whilst the audience of the Green Star - Communities rating tool is likely to be diverse, stakeholder feedback has identified that the target users of the rating tool should be those involved in the planning, design and development of communities. These include, but are not limited to:

- Planners (regional, town, urban, social, environmental, infrastructure and economic);
- Designers (architects, landscape architects, urban designers, urbanists and engineers);
- Developers (development companies, constructors, financiers); and
- Government agencies (Commonwealth, State, Local and government owned corporations);

Draft attributes of the rating tool

Based on the Stage 1 stakeholder consultation and research projects undertaken by the GBCA, a degree of consensus has emerged for the rating tool attributes. These draft attributes are summarised below.

Sustainability Coverage

Stakeholders believed the full sustainability coverage of the framework should be carried through to the rating tool. There was clear feedback that industry and government did not want the rating tool to be an environmental rating tool only, but rather address all five principles in the framework, namely; Liveability, Economic Prosperity, Environmental Responsibility, Design Excellence and Leadership and Governance.

Categories

It is the desire of government and industry to have a holistic sustainability spectrum of issues represented in the rating tool, and as such it is proposed that the five national principles from the Stage 1 framework become the primary categories of the rating tool. This does not necessarily mean they will be the only five categories, but will form the foundations of the rating tool.

Credits

Feedback suggests that the rating tool credits should address the issues underpinning each of the five principles in the framework, or at least be guided by the principles and the underpinning issues. Feedback also identified the importance of having both qualitative and quantitative credits (as appropriate) that measure process and outcomes. It was also clear from stakeholders that there should be minimum requirements (credits) for each of the five categories.

Output

Stakeholders have identified their desire for Green Star - Communities to provide some form of rating. There was also strong interest in the rating being supported by a summary of performance across all categories that allowed stakeholders to understand the breakdown of the results.

Independent Certification

Stakeholders are keen to have the option for their projects to be independently verified by a third party entity.

Project Scope

Stakeholders clearly identified the need for the rating tool to be scalable across different sizes and types of projects including residential, non-residential in greenfield, brownfield or existing communities.

There are still a number of key issues and questions about the scope of the rating tool that need to be addressed early in Stage 2. These include, but are not limited to:

- Defining the assessment and rating process (eg. points, percentages, assessment milestones, type of rating etc);
- Defining the certification process (eg. independent assessors, licensed organisations, self assessment etc);
- Articulating the project types eligible for certification; and
- Scoping industry education requirements (eg. training courses, GSAP for Communities etc).



What about existing tools?

The GBCA has maintained a position that it does not wish to 'recreate', 're-do' or 'reinvent' best practice standards during the tool development stage of Green Star - Communities. Like other Green Star rating tools, GSC will seek to contain credits that reference existing best practice standards, tools, guidelines and codes. New benchmarks or standards will only be investigated where stakeholders identify the need.

Our project partner, VicUrban, has made significant investments in the development of a community sustainability rating tool and has provided this tool to the GBCA for consideration. Similarly, other international green building councils and affiliated organisations have invested in the development of rating tools for communities and neighbourhoods. These include the US Green Building Council (USGBC), the Canada Green Building Council (CaGBC) and the Building Research Establishment (BRE) in the UK and the global Clinton Climate Initiative. There are also industry associations (eg. AILA, UDIA) and a range of GBCA members who have developed their own sustainability assessment processes and methodologies. Several have indicated their willingness to contribute that material to the rating tool development process.

It is the aspiration for Green Star - Communities to build upon the information and lessons learnt from others who have followed similar paths. This will allow the GBCA to maximise the opportunities in developing a comprehensive, robust and useable sustainable communities rating tool without the need to invest in developing all of the indicators and benchmarks from scratch.

To achieve this, the GBCA has:

- engaged with international organisations who have recently developed similar tools to learn from their experiences and identify what approaches, processes and information is replicable for the rating tool;
- commissioned an independent review of Australian and international rating and assessment tools used in urban developments, to identify existing standards, credits and benchmarks that could be referenced or adopted in rating tool;
- worked with project sponsors and supporters to identify existing practices and standards used in their current projects that represent best practice sustainable community development;
- established a Technical Working Committee of industry and government representatives to identify, critically review and evaluate existing material and develop the Green Star - Communities credits; and
- maintained a high level of stakeholder engagement during the tool development process to ensure that as many existing standards as possible are identified and reviewed.

A priority for the GBCA has been to learn from those who have fulfilled similar aspirations in the development of sustainability rating tools for communities. As such, engagement with the USGBC, CaGBC, BRE and the Clinton Climate Initiative commenced early in Stage 1 and will continue throughout Stage 2. Each of these organisations has had different experiences with both developing and implementing their frameworks and tools and the GBCA has had the opportunity to hear first hand about the strengths and weaknesses in their efforts. We will be using their experiences to inform the rating tool development process in an attempt to avoid some of the difficulties that they have encountered.

Moving Forward into Stage 2

The GSC project has always maintained a strong level of governance, which was established at the commencement of Stage 1 of the project. The Stage 1 Framework was developed in collaboration with a Technical Reference Committee (TRC), who through the TRC Chair, reported to a National Steering Committee. Whilst these two committee's were established for the first stage of the project only, some elements and members may remain involved to ensure the vision contained in the five national principles are carried through into the rating tool.

Feedback received during the Stage 1 consultation phase identified the need for the GBCA to continue to maintain a level of governance relevant to the task of developing a national sustainable communities rating tool which touches on a diversity of professions, industries and interests. In response to this, the GBCA with the support of the Stage 1 Steering Committee has developed a Stage 2 Governance structure which includes the following elements:

- **Industry Advisory Committee:** This group will represent national interests with respect to sustainable communities, and include relevant professional, industry and government bodies. It may also represent national policy and research agendas relevant to sustainable communities. This committee will provide an advisory function, and will not be responsible for any consensus building or decision making.
- **Technical Working Committee (TWC):** The TWC will be the primary vehicle for establishing best practice standards in the rating tool. The TWC will comprise sub-committees representing each of the rating tool categories. The chairs of each sub-committee will be responsible for ensuring integration is maximised across the categories.
- **Technical Expert Panel:** The technical expert panel will review the output of the TWC as required. This expert input and review function will help the TWC identify best practice standards that are evidence-based, accurate and comprehensive.

A PILOT rating tool will be developed and presented to the GBCA Board for approval before its release. PILOT projects will be sought to test the rating tool before it is finalised as a Version 1. Feedback from the PILOT process will be used to improve the content of the rating tool before it's launched.

Stage 2

Further information and feedback

Further information is available from the GBCA website and stakeholders are encouraged to contact the Green Star Communities Project Leader Adam Beck on 0410 506 043 or adam.beck@gbca.org.au.

The GBCA is interested in your feedback on this draft tool scoping paper and any comments can be forwarded to the Project Leader.

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