



PRECERTIFICATION GUIDANCE

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Overview

TRUE (Total Resource Use and Efficiency) is a comprehensive certification program recognizing facilities, events, and construction sites for minimizing resource consumption, preventing waste, and redesigning material life cycles so that all residual materials are reused in a closed loop. TRUE was developed as a leadership standard to recognize projects that have defined and achieved their zero waste goals, making positive impacts on people, the environment, and the economy locally and globally. However, leadership is not confined to those that have reached zero waste. Leadership is taking the first step, and all the steps that follow.

TRUE precertification recognizes projects which have implemented the fundamental actions and policies needed to effectively pursue zero waste and have demonstrated a commitment to achieving TRUE certification. As such, precertification is available to all projects regardless of the level of diversion performance that has been achieved. It is an optional, incremental pathway to formal certification that prioritizes the core actions essential to getting a successful start: auditing, analyzing, and aspiring to zero waste. As precertification is an optional step and is not required for TRUE certification, project teams may choose to skip precertification and pursue TRUE certification directly, if they are ready. The information outlined below offers details on the requirements and how to achieve precertification using the [TRUE rating system](#).

Precertification Process

The precertification scope, process, and project definition is the same as outlined in the TRUE rating system and the [Guide to Certification](#), with some key differences outlined below.

- The fees for precertification differ from the standard certification fees. Please visit the [TRUE website](#) or [contact us](#) for more information on the fees associated with precertification.
- Project teams must complete and submit the “precertification” section of the TRUE application form to provide all narratives.
- The review process and timelines are the same as for a standard TRUE certification project. Please refer to the TRUE [Guide to Certification](#) for more details on the review process and timelines. Portfolios may pursue precertification for their projects utilizing a streamlined documentation submittal and review approach.
- Precertified projects are not subject to annual certification maintenance or any other post-certification requirements until after achieving TRUE certification.
- Precertification is valid for three years.
- There are no points awarded or tiers of precertification levels. The project team must document and address all the TRUE minimum program requirements (MPRs) and credits noted below to achieve precertification.

Precertification Requirements

To achieve precertification, project teams must submit strategies or complete actions addressing the following subset of TRUE MPRs and credits. Documentation must be provided for all MPRs and credits listed (any deviations from rating system requirements have been noted below). There is no minimum required diversion rate. One document may be developed to address several requirements- for example, the zero waste goal can be included in the zero waste policy document.

MPR and credit information provided during precertification will be applied to a project's future TRUE certification, wherever applicable. When applying for certification, if there have been any updates or changes since precertification, the project team should submit updated documentation and describe the updates. If precertification has expired, all documentation must be resubmitted when pursuing certification.

MINIMUM PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS (MPRs)

Demonstrate compliance and/or provide the strategies that will be used to achieve the following five MPRs, as outlined in the TRUE rating system. Modifications on requirements are noted in italics. A quick reference table of all requirements can be found in Appendix A.

1. Company or project seeking certification has a zero waste policy in place.

Submittal Documents:

Provide a document outlining the company's zero waste policy as described in MPR #1 above. The policy must contain the following, at a minimum:

- o The zero waste goal
- o Procedures for the management and diversion of materials
- o Diversion performance monitoring and reporting procedures

2. Project has achieved an average 90% or greater overall diversion from landfill, incineration (WTE), and the environment for solid, non-hazardous wastes (referred to as "materials" herein) for the most recent twelve months. Diverted materials are reduced, reused, recycled, composted and/or recovered for productive use in nature or the economy.

Modification for precertification: There is no minimum diversion rate required until the project pursues TRUE certification.

Submittal Documents:

Provide a narrative describing the strategies that will be used to achieve this requirement upon certification. No diversion data or documentation is required to satisfy this MPR, however it is required to comply with MPR #4.

3. Project meets all federal, state/provincial and local solid waste and recycling laws and regulations. Project complies with all air, water and land discharge permits required for collection, handling or processing of materials.

Submittal Documents:

Provide a narrative describing how the project is currently in compliance with MPR #3.

4. Project has data documenting a base year of waste diversion data, and measurements since the base year that adjust for changes in size, type and nature of business.

Modification for precertification: If a twelve-month base year of weight data is not available because it has not been tracked, or is not applicable, project teams may provide data for a minimum of one month. Alternatively, weight estimates based on

service volumes and other records will be accepted to compile the twelve months of baseline data.

Submittal Documents:

Provide data and documentation as outlined in Zero Waste Reporting Credit 1 in the TRUE rating system, with the following exceptions:

- There is no minimum diversion rate required for baseline data.
- A minimum of one month of data can be provided for facilities and construction projects.
- The data must be recent- from within the last three months.

5. Project does not exceed a 10% contamination level for any materials that leave the site.

Modification for precertification: Full compliance is not required until the project pursues TRUE certification.

Submittal Documents:

Provide a narrative describing the strategies that will be used to achieve this requirement. Note full compliance is not required until the project pursues certification.

CREDITS

Demonstrate compliance with the following nine credits from the TRUE rating system. Unless a modification is noted, satisfy all credit requirements listed in the TRUE rating system. A quick reference table of all requirements can be found in Appendix A.

• **Redesign Credit 1: Right size collection containers and service levels**

Modification for precertification: Adjustments to container sizes and/or pick up frequencies need not be completed until TRUE certification. Conduct a right sizing evaluation only and develop a periodic review strategy.

Submittal Documents:

Provide the following documents and narrative:

- A document with the right sizing evaluation findings. It is advised to conduct this evaluation during the waste and recycling audit. The findings can be included in the waste audit report.
- In the evaluation document (or waste audit report), include recommendations for immediate right sizing adjustments of container sizes and/or pick-up frequencies that should be made.
- A narrative describing how periodic right sizing reviews will be conducted moving forward.

• **Redesign Credit 3: Review all 9 points of generation**

Submittal Documents:

Provide all documentation as outlined in the TRUE rating system for this credit.

- **Purchasing Credit 1: Adopt an Environmentally Preferred Purchasing (EPP) guideline or policy**

Modification for precertification: If an EPP policy that addresses zero waste has not yet been adopted, simply indicate the strategies that will be used to develop a policy that achieves the credit requirement.

Submittal Documents:

Provide a narrative that includes the following: how the policy will be created, its planned contents, and how it will help reduce waste or address zero waste products, packaging, or services.

- **Leadership Credit 1: Adopt zero waste goal at upper management level**

Submittal Documents:

Provide all documentation as outlined in the TRUE rating system for this credit.

- **Training Credit 1: Provide zero waste goal/policy to all employees**

Documentation requirement:

Provide all documentation as outlined in the TRUE rating system for this credit.

- **Zero Waste Analysis Credit 1: Complete annual physical waste audit**

Documentation requirement:

Provide all documentation as outlined in the TRUE rating system for this credit. Note: this credit achievement in precertification may not be applied to future TRUE certification, as the credit requires the audit to have occurred within the last twelve months. A repeat audit may be needed to comply, depending on the timing of precertification and certification.

- **Zero Waste Analysis Credit 2: Analyze results of annual waste audit and implement recommendations**

Modification for precertification: It is not required to implement the recommendations until the project pursues TRUE certification.

Submittal Documents:

Provide the following documentation:

- A narrative describing how information from the waste audit was analyzed
- A report explaining the results and recommendations

- **Zero Waste Analysis Credit 3: Complete annual physical audit of recyclables**

Submittal Documents:

Provide all documentation as outlined in the TRUE rating system for this credit. Note: this credit achievement in precertification may not be applied to future TRUE certification, as the credit requires the audit to have occurred within the last twelve months. A repeat audit may be needed to comply, depending on the timing of precertification and certification.

- **Hazardous Waste Prevention Credit 1: Properly handle hazardous materials**

Submittal Documents:

Provide all documentation as outlined in the TRUE rating system for this credit. If this credit is not applicable because the site does not generate hazardous waste, please indicate so in a narrative.

How to Get Started

The following section outlines actions and policies that are not required for precertification but are helpful for getting started on the zero waste and TRUE certification journey. Although the MPR and credit actions are not required to be completed in any specific order, it is advised that project teams begin by assessing their performance and then from that assessment, develop a plan to get to zero waste. It is strongly recommended that project team members earn the [TRUE Advisor](#) credential for the greatest understanding of zero waste and TRUE credits. Last, a TRUE credit gap analysis using the [TRUE Certification Planning Tool](#) is recommended to assess the project's standing and next steps towards certification.

TRUE Advisor

Although not required for precertification, project team members should gain a foundation in the program by obtaining the [TRUE Advisor](#) credential. The certificate program provides a comprehensive curriculum on zero waste policies and programs, and helps projects participating in TRUE certification. TRUE Advisor certificate holders have a practical understanding of the most current zero waste principles, demonstrate a clear commitment to professional growth in advancing TRUE values, and can help prepare their project or other projects for TRUE certification.

Audit

Begin the zero waste and precertification journey by gathering information on service levels, waste types, and diversion performance by conducting the following audits:

- An evaluation of collection container sizes and pick-up frequencies to ensure they are appropriate to the current volume of materials
- A zero waste audit of landfill/incineration/waste to energy (WTE) bound material and of recyclables. Note: it is recommended that project teams also audit other material streams such as compostables, although this is not required in any TRUE credits.
- A review of the project by area to evaluate the highest and best use of materials
- An assessment of compliance with solid waste and recycling regulations

Completing the above actions will support achievement of Redesign Credit 1, Zero Waste Analysis Credits 1 and 3, Redesign Credit 3, MPR #3, and Hazardous Waste Prevention Credit 1.

Analyze

Analyze information gathered from the waste audits and service records to assess current diversion performance and propose future actions to take to increase diversion:

- Compile a report of the zero waste audit findings that includes recommendations.
- Review service records, collect or estimate weights, and make calculations to measure current diversion performance as a baseline.

Completing the above actions will support achievement of Zero Waste Analysis Credit 2 and MPR #4.

Aspire

Based on the findings in the above analyses, set goals and develop a plan to achieve zero waste:

- Adopt a zero waste goal and a zero waste policy.
- Lay the groundwork for total participation of all employees by sharing the zero waste goal and policy with them.
- While not required for precertification or certification, it is recommended that project teams write a zero waste plan to achieve as much zero waste and TRUE certification success as possible. It is advised that the plan addresses the following:
 - Waste reduction and prevention as a priority
 - Increasing diversion for what cannot be reduced or prevented
 - Employee engagement and training
 - Stakeholder engagement (upstream and downstream)
 - Periodic waste stream and service re-evaluations
 - New strategies or policies such as purchasing for zero waste

Completing the above actions will support achievement of Leadership Credit 1, MPR #1, Training Credit 1, Purchasing Credit 1, MPR #2, and MPR #5.

Preparing for TRUE certification

Conducting a gap analysis using TRUE credits can provide a comprehensive picture of where the project is on their journey to zero waste and TRUE certification. The gap analysis could be conducted along with the various types of audits listed above, before precertification, or after precertification is achieved (it is not required for precertification or certification). The certification gap analysis can be completed using the [TRUE Certification Planning Tool](#).

For more recommendations and guidance on preparing for certification, utilize the resources listed below. The project team will also be provided information on next steps to complete TRUE certification after precertification is awarded.

Resources

[TRUE website](#)

[Resources page](#) ([TRUE rating system](#), guidance documents, forms, tools, and more)

[TRUE Advisor](#)

Articles:

- [Zero waste strategies to get you started on your journey](#)
- [How to prepare for TRUE certification](#)
- [How to meet your certification goal date](#)

[USGBC Education Hub](#) (featuring TRUE rating system and zero waste educational resources)

Email us at true@gbci.org with any questions or for more information on TRUE.

Appendix A: Precertification Requirements Quick Reference

TRUE Minimum Program Requirement	Rating System Page #	Precertification Requirements
MPR 1: Company or project seeking certification has a zero waste policy in place.	n/a	Meet all requirements
MPR 2: Project has achieved an average 90% or greater overall diversion from landfill, incineration (WTE), and the environment for solid, non-hazardous wastes (referred to as “materials” herein) for the most recent 12 months. Diverted materials are reduced, reused, recycled, composted and/or recovered for productive use in nature or the economy.	n/a	Meet the modified requirements listed in the “Precertification Requirements” section
MPR 3: Project meets all federal, state/provincial and local solid waste and recycling laws and regulations. Project complies with all air, water and land discharge permits required for collection, handling or processing of materials.	n/a	Meet all requirements
MPR 4: Project has data documenting a base year of waste diversion data, and measurements since the base year that adjust for changes in size, type and nature of business.	27	Meet the modified requirements listed in the “Precertification Requirements” section
MPR 5: Project does not exceed a 10% contamination level for any materials that leave the site.	n/a	Meet the modified requirements listed in the “Precertification Requirements” section
TRUE Credit	Rating System Page #	Precertification Requirements
Redesign Credit 1: Right size collection containers and service levels	13	Meet the modified requirements listed in the “Precertification Requirements” section
Redesign Credit 3: Review all 9 points of generation	14	Meet all requirements
Purchasing Credit 1: Adopt an Environmentally Preferred Purchasing (EPP) guideline or policy	31	Meet the modified requirements listed in the “Precertification Requirements” section
Leadership Credit 1: Adopt zero waste goal at upper management level	35	Meet all requirements
Training Credit 1: Provide zero waste goal/policy to all employees	38	Meet all requirements
Zero Waste Analysis Credit 1: Complete annual physical waste audit	42	Meet all requirements
Zero Waste Analysis Credit 2: Analyze results of annual waste audit and implement recommendations	42	Meet the modified requirements listed in the “Precertification Requirements” section
Zero Waste Analysis Credit 3: Complete annual physical audit of recyclables	43	Meet all requirements
Hazardous Waste Prevention Credit 1: Properly handle hazardous materials	47	Meet all requirements, as applicable