



## New codes: a new recipe for sustainability

### [Government Procurement](#)

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Imagine your favorite family recipe. Now that you are all salivating and hungry, think about how it got to you. It has been handed down from your parents, aunts, uncles, cousins and you are handing it down to your kids, and maybe even to your neighbors and/or friends. It isn't written down anywhere, because it is so ingrained in you....but at some point in its history it was put together. Someone way back in your family tree combined ingredients in a special fashion, and then wrote it down when they got it right. Some of today's [procurement](#) practices resemble this process.

No matter what specification, standard or guideline we use when procuring products and services, its requirements probably had their starting point in a code. Has everyone who is involved in the purchasing/procurement function read the original code that the products procured are trying to meet? Probably not. Instead they are trusting in the 'recipe' that has been handed down.

Well there's a new recipe in town. Just as they do to meet code level requirements, procurement professionals have acquired the habit of purchasing to help meet criteria laid out in a sustainable rating system. While this hasn't been easy, it is something that most have gotten used to. Now what if you found out that the next step in this evolution is not just that certain buildings and structures must 'raise the bar' by meeting rating system requirements, but it is that all of us contribute to 'raising the floor' for building.

Many authorities having jurisdiction (AHJs) have been implementing sustainable codes for some time now, but a few recent announcements/developments have started to push sustainable codes more to the forefront of the building conversation. First and foremost, in August of this year the International Code Council (ICC), ASHRAE, the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IES) and the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) announced an agreement to collaborate on the development of ASHRAE 189.1, the International Green Construction Code (IgCC) and the LEED [green building](#) program. Essentially the cooperative agreement aims to bring some clarity for AHJs that currently must pick and choose from the multiple options for sustainable programs that have been or can be used as code. Starting in 2018 the IgCC and ASHRAE 189.1 will be combined into one sustainable code level document, instead of the current 'separate but compliant' agreement currently in place. The agreement also will hopefully bring to fruition some alignment between the code documents and how compliance with them would fit into LEED building certification.

The second development is that some larger municipalities have started to adopt the current IgCC (with ASHRAE 189.1 being an optional compliance pathway) as the model for building practices in their jurisdiction. The cities of Dallas, Texas, and Washington, D.C. have invested a significant amount of time, energy and effort to put into place, sustainable building requirements based upon the 2012 IgCC. These aren't optional requirements either – they are now part of these cities' base building codes requirements. City officials, builders, owners, operators and product manufacturers in each of these cities got together over time and agreed that the adoption of this measure was a productive and positive step forward for

building.

Of course these developments follow in the footsteps of the first state-wide adoption of a mandatory ‘green’ section for a state building code – CALGreen in the state of California. This state-wide adoption was for residential and nonresidential properties, and while the building market hasn’t yet regained its peak numbers of the pre-2008 building boom, I don’t believe that anyone can say that building has been stunted by the code.

So what does this all mean for professional purchasers and procurement officials? Will you have to learn a whole new recipe, all new ingredients, weird cooking utensils and tools? The bad news is that sustainable building loves its acronyms (VOCs = volatile organic compounds, EPDs = Environmental Product Declarations, LCA = Life Cycle Analysis/Assessment). The good news is that there are similar tools to those used when you were purchasing for the base codes, which can now help you with sustainable building codes. The implementation of the code has always relied on trusted, scientifically-backed and -developed standards from organizations that purchasers, code officials and architects have trusted for years. Many of those same third-party organizations have scientific standards and certifications programs to help you find products that meet product VOC emission, energy or [water](#) efficiency or material content requirements in these codes.

A look through these sustainable codes will show trusted names and resources that you have used for years. As with anything new, visit these resources’ websites, take a quick read and download a relevant standard or two. This will quickly show if these trusted organizations have a relevant certification program that allows for quick, easy and free searching for code compliance.

While the ingredients/requirements may smell different and the cooking techniques may initially feel foreign, we should remember that there was a time when our families’ favorite recipe began as something new and different on the table.

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