

CREDIT INTERPRETATION #001

“Assessing Envision Avoidance Credits”

Relevant Credits:

NW1.1 Preserve Prime Habitat

NW1.2 Preserve Wetlands and Surface Water

NW1.3 Preserve Prime Farmland

NW1.4 Avoid Adverse Geology

NW1.5 Preserve Floodplain Functions

NW1.6 Avoid Unsuitable Development on Steep Slopes

Issue

Credits NW1.1 to NW1.6 involve avoiding certain sensitive sites. How should project teams assess achievement in these credits if the project team cannot demonstrate any active decision to avoid sensitive sites or if impacting certain sensitive sites was never a possibility due to the location and context of the project (e.g. a project located in a desert impacting wetlands).

Interpretation¹

To achieve credit for avoiding sites in credits NW1.1 to NW1.6 project teams must demonstrate that impacting a sensitive site was a seriously considered option and that decisions made during planning or design led to avoiding the sensitive site. A project will not be awarded Envision points for avoiding certain situations or locations if there is no reasonable chance that those locations or situations were in play during the project decision-making process. In those cases, the credit should be classified as “Not Applicable” and removed from scoring consideration.

Discussion

Envision has several credits where the applicant can earn points for reducing or eliminating negative ecological or resource impacts by not locating the project on a site with certain characteristics or designations. The project can reach Envision levels of achievement and earn points for these credits in cases where there is a legitimate option to place the project on a site in an area where the designated sensitive sites exist. These credits should be considered not applicable in cases where there is no prime habitat, wetlands or surface water, prime farmland, adverse geology, floodplains, or steep slopes to avoid. The project team needs to actively take steps to avoid these locations or situations for it to count for Envision credit.

Example

In credit NW1.3 Preserve Prime Farmland, a project can earn a “Conserving” Level of Achievement by not siting the project on an area designated as prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of state-wide importance. If the project is located in a place like Alaska where there is no farmland that meets these criteria² then the project team should mark credit NW1.3 as “Not Applicable” so it will be excluded from the project assessment score.

¹ The Envision guidance manual is the official reference for project assessments. Credit interpretations from ISI are intended to clarify how Envision credits are assessed and verified in certain situations encountered by real projects. For questions on how credits apply to a project contact ISI.

² http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ak/soils/surveys/?cid=nrcs142p2_035988

CREDIT INTERPRETATION #002

“Calculating Percentages for Materials Credits”

Relevant Credits:

RA1.2: Support Sustainable Procurement Practices
RA1.3: Use Recycled Materials
RA1.4: Use Regional Materials

RA1.5: Divert Waste from Landfills
RA1.7: Provide for Deconstruction and Recycling

Issue

For the materials credits, can project teams calculate the percentages of materials used on projects and/or diverted from landfill based on cost?

Interpretation³

To achieve credit for RA1.2, RA1.3, RA1.4, RA1.5 and RA1.7, project teams must quantify the percentage of sustainable materials used or the amount of waste diverted from landfill. **Calculations may be done by weight, volume or cost, as long as the calculations are consistent within a given credit.**

Discussion

Envision has several credits related to materials where the applicant can earn points for using sustainable materials on a project, whether they are materials sourced from manufacturers and suppliers that implement sustainable practices (RA1.2), reclaimed or recycled materials (RA1.3), regionally sourced materials (RA1.4) and credits where the applicant can earn points for diverting waste from landfills (RA1.5) or designing the project with future recycling, reuse, and upcycling in mind (RA1.7). Project teams pursuing these credits are sometimes unsure whether they should calculate the percentages required for these credits by cost, weight or volume, as the Envision guidance manual does not consistently reference all three methods. For example, RA1.2 clearly states that the percentage of materials from manufacturers and suppliers that implement sustainable practices can be calculated by weight, volume or cost, but RA1.3 does not specifically state that cost is an acceptable measure as the credit only references weight and volume. This credit interpretation was written to clarify this issue – project teams may present their calculations for these materials credits based on any of these three measures: weight, volume, or cost.

Example

In credit RA1.3 Use Recycled Materials, a project can earn a “Superior” Level of Achievement by demonstrating that at least 50% of materials, by weight, volume or cost are from reclaimed or recycled materials.

³ The Envision guidance manual is the official reference for project assessments. Credit interpretations from ISI are intended to clarify how Envision credits are assessed and verified in certain situations encountered by real projects. For questions on how credits apply to a project contact ISI.

CREDIT INTERPRETATION #003

“RA1.3: Reuse of Existing Structures and Materials and/or Specifying Materials with Recycled Content”

Relevant Credits:

RA1.3: Use Recycled Materials

Issue

Credit RA1.3 requires that the project reduce the use of virgin materials and avoid sending useful materials to landfill by specifying reused materials, including structures, and material with recycled content. Are both evaluation criteria (A and B) required for each level of achievement for this credit?

Interpretation⁴

Project teams are only required to satisfy one of the two evaluation criteria (A or B) for this credit. In some cases, project teams may be able to address both A and B, but satisfying both evaluation criteria is not a requirement to earn a level of achievement.

Discussion

Throughout the Envision manual, it is necessary to meet all of the evaluation criteria listed for each level of achievement. In this case, however, project teams may choose to meet the percentage requirements for criterion A **AND/OR** criterion B. The difference between how credit RA1.3 is assessed versus the other credits in the manual is subtle, as only the metric and language in the levels of achievement table suggest that either or both evaluation criteria may be met. The language throughout the remainder of the credit, including the way the required evaluation criteria are stated in parentheses for each level of achievement, make it unclear that this is an “and/or” credit. This credit interpretation was written to clarify that unlike other credits in the Envision manual, this is an and/or credit.

Example

For RA1.3, a project may make use of an existing structure located on the project site but may not specify any materials with recycled content. If the project team is able to demonstrate that the reused structure on site accounts for at least 5% of materials used on the project, criterion A would be satisfied for an “Improved” level of achievement.

⁴ The Envision guidance manual is the official reference for project assessments. Credit interpretations from ISI are intended to clarify how Envision credits are assessed and verified in certain situations encountered by real projects. For questions on how credits apply to a project contact ISI.

CREDIT INTERPRETATION #004

“RA1.4: Clarification on what Constitutes a ‘Regional’ Material”

Relevant Credits:

RA1.4: Use Regional Materials

Issue

Credit RA1.4 requires that the project minimize transportation costs and impacts by specifying materials from local sources. How should project teams assess achievement in this credit if materials have been sourced from local suppliers but no information is available or provided pertaining to extraction, harvest, recovery or manufacture distances?

Interpretation⁵

To attain a level of achievement for this credit, project teams must demonstrate that materials were sourced from suppliers or retailers that are located within specific distance requirements. Information pertaining to where materials were extracted, harvested, recovered and/or manufactured is not required to satisfy the requirements for evaluation criterion A, though if this information is available, project teams may choose to share it as part of the documentation submitted for this credit.

Discussion

Criterion A for this credit suggests that regional materials are those sourced from local suppliers or retailers located within specified distances from the project site, yet the numbered items underneath criterion A suggest that sourcing materials from local suppliers or retailers is insufficient; that project teams must supply information about extraction, harvest, or recovery and manufacture distances for specified materials. While the latter could arguably be perceived to be more environmentally beneficial from a transportation impact perspective and could arguably contribute more to local economies, information pertaining to extraction, harvest, or recovery and manufacture is often unavailable and/or too burdensome for project teams to reasonably attain.

Example

For RA1.4, if a project is able to demonstrate that 100% of soils and aggregates were sourced from a supplier located within 50 mi / 80 km of the project site and 100% of concrete was sourced from a supplier located within 100 mi / 160 km of the project site and these material types accounted for 95% of materials on the project, a “Conserving” level of achievement would be assessed for this credit.

⁵ The *Envision guidance manual* is the official reference for project assessments. Credit interpretations from ISI are intended to clarify how *Envision credits* are assessed and verified in certain situations encountered by real projects. For questions on how credits apply to a project contact ISI.

CREDIT INTERPRETATION #005

“QL2.2: Clarifying the Required Evaluation Criteria for the ‘Conserving’ and ‘Restorative’ Levels of Achievement”

Relevant Credits

QL2.2 Minimize Noise and Vibration

Issue

Credit QL2.2 involves minimizing noise and vibration generated during construction and operation of the completed project to maintain and improve community livability. How can project teams determine the difference between a “Conserving” and “Restorative” level of achievement for this credit if evaluation criterion C is required for both?

Interpretation⁶

Only criteria A and B are required for the “Conserving” level of achievement whereas criteria A, B and C are required for the “Restorative” level of achievement.

Discussion

The “Conserving” level of achievement requires project teams to achieve accepted standard target levels for noise and vibration, whereas “Restorative” requires project teams to demonstrate that noise and vibration levels have been markedly reduced to below standard target levels that substantially improve community livability. However, distinguishing between the two levels of achievement has been a significant challenge for many project teams pursuing this credit as the Envision manual contains a typo—it states that all three evaluation criteria (A, B, C) are required for both “Conserving” and “Restorative” when in fact only “Restorative” requires evaluation criterion C to be met. As a result, this credit interpretation was written to clarify the required evaluation criteria for these two levels of achievement.

Example

For credit QL2.2, if a project team is able to demonstrate that it has satisfied the requirements for evaluation criteria A and B, a “Conserving” level of achievement will be awarded.

⁶ The Envision guidance manual is the official reference for project assessments. Credit interpretations from ISI are intended to clarify how Envision credits are assessed and verified in certain situations encountered by real projects. For questions on how credits apply to a project contact ISI.