

# ANSI/BIFMA e3-2024 Furniture Sustainability Standard

## General FAQs

### **Q1: What is the ANSI/BIFMA e3-2024 standard?**

The e3-2024 standard is the sixth edition of the BIFMA Furniture Sustainability Standard, providing a multi-attribute framework for assessing the environmental, health, and social performance of commercial furniture products.

### **Q2: When was the 2024 edition published and when does it take effect?**

The 2024 edition was published by BIFMA following ANSI approval on April 21, 2025.

### **Q3: What are the major updates from the previous version?**

Key changes include revised criteria for material health, water stewardship, responsible packaging, and expanded Tier 4 options including positive climate impact.

### **Q4: What are the conformance tiers in the e3 standard?**

There are four tiers:

- Tier 1 (Bronze / LEVEL 1)
- Tier 2 (Silver / LEVEL 2)
- Tier 3 (Gold / LEVEL 3)
- Tier 4 (Platinum / LEVEL 4)

Each higher tier builds on the previous one with progressively advanced sustainability requirements.

### **Q5: What is the difference between e3 conformance and LEVEL® certification?**

e3 conformance can be claimed via first-, second-, or third-party assessments. LEVEL® certification requires verification by an approved third-party certification body.

## FAQs for Manufacturers

### **Q6: What are the transition rules for current LEVEL participants?**

- New applicants (no existing certified products) must certify to e3-2024 beginning April 22, 2026.
- For existing products:
  - If recertification occurs on or before April 21, 2026, you may choose to recertify to either the 2019 or 2024 version.
  - If your recertification occurs after April 21, 2026, you must certify to the 2024 version of the standard.

**Q7: What types of furniture are eligible?**

The standard applies to business and institutional furniture, including desks, seating, systems, tables, architectural walls, storage, and accessories.

**Q8: Can contract manufacturers certify products under this standard?**

Yes, but the applicant must clearly define the organizational boundary and ensure access to required data and processes.

**Q9: Are all product categories eligible for Tier 4 certification?**

Not necessarily. Tier 4 eligibility depends on the product's material composition, environmental profile, and ability to meet advanced criteria.

**Q10: Is an onsite audit required for certification and recertification?**

Onsite audits are required for certification and typically required for recertification (see question below). The location of final assembly is audited.

**Q11: Can recertification occur without an onsite audit?**

Yes, under specific conditions such as no significant product or process changes and documented evidence from the original audit.

**Q12: Who can conduct Supplier Assessments noted in Section 4.5?**

Supplier assessments are required when a product component or assembly constituting 40% or more of the product's weight is transformed outside the applicant's organizational boundary. These assessments may be performed by:

- A qualified internal auditor from the Applicant organization;
- A designated representative trained in sustainability auditing; or
- An independent third party.

Examples include integrating the review into a quality or compliance audit conducted by the sourcing or sustainability team, or hiring a third-party auditor to verify conformance to relevant Tier criteria at a contract manufacturer's site. The assessment must be documented and address audit scope, criteria evaluated, findings, and any corrective actions.

Raw materials such as particleboard, counterweights, glass, etc are exempt from this requirement.

**Example Scenarios:**

- Scenario 1: An assembled set of height adjustable table legs weighing greater than 40% of the total weight of the product is delivered to LEVEL Applicant. The Applicant attaches the legs to a tabletop it manufactured at its location. The combined product is shipped to the customer, dealer or distribution site. The Applicant's location is the point of final assembly therefore the certification body will conduct an onsite audit at this manufacturing location. Given the legs exceed the 40% threshold, the Applicant will

conduct (or delegate to another party) an onsite assessment at the leg suppliers location per 4.5.

- Scenario 2: An Applicant receives at its distribution center legs from Supplier A and a top from Supplier B. The parts are combined on a pallet and shipped to a dealer or customer. The legs weigh 55% of the total product weight, the tabletop weighs 45%. The location of final assembly is the leg manufacturer. Therefore, the certification body will audit Supplier A. The Applicant will conduct an onsite assessment at the tabletop supplier (Supplier B) per 4.5.
- Scenario 3: An applicant receives a kit of parts from Supplier A (e.g. chair legs, a cylinder, and a chair back). The Applicant assembles the pieces together at their site to make the final product. The pieces, combined, weigh more than 40% of the product. Given the pieces arrive unassembled, the point of final assembly is at the Applicant's site. The certification body will audit the Applicant's sites. Supplier A does not require an assessment because it has not delivered a completed assembly exceeding the 40% threshold.

**Q15: Are Mutual Recognition Assessments acceptable to meet Section 4.5's requirement for a supplier?**

Yes, if a supplier can provide documentation demonstrating conformance to the requirements of 4.5. The supplier assessment and assessment documentation must address the manufacturing processes related to the Applicant's product.

**Q14: What must be included in the Bill of Materials (BOM)?**

The BOM must include material type, weights, finishes, recycled content, and any exclusions. For Tier 3/4, supplemental materials are also required.

**Q15: What is required for public chemical disclosure?**

At Tier 3 and above, manufacturers must publish a chemical inventory, screening results against chemicals of concern, and polymer sourcing information.

**Q16: How are exclusions handled?**

Materials that are <0.1% by weight and total <2% can be excluded, with documentation. Certain materials like adhesives and finishes must always be included.

**Q17: What is required to achieve Tier 4 for water stewardship?**

Applicants must disclose at least two water stewardship initiatives (within 3 years), including stakeholder collaboration and measurable impact.

**Q18: What does "positive climate impact" mean in the standard?**

It refers to generating a "carbon handprint" greater than the product's cradle-to-gate carbon footprint, verified by a third party.

**Q19: Can I use an Environmental Product Declaration (EPD) to meet LCA requirements?**

Yes, a third-party verified EPD that aligns with ISO 14025 and BIFMA PCRs meets Tier 4 requirements for LCA disclosure.

# FAQs for Procurement Professionals

## **Q19: What does LEVEL® certification guarantee in terms of sustainability?**

LEVEL certification ensures that a product has undergone third-party verification to demonstrate conformance with multiple environmental, health, and social impact criteria across different achievement tiers.

## **Q20: How can procurement teams use LEVEL certification in their specifications?**

LEVEL tiers can be used to qualify or differentiate products based on sustainability performance. Contracts or RFPs can require a minimum LEVEL 1, 2, or higher certification depending on sustainability goals.

## **Q21: Is LEVEL comparable to other ecolabels?**

Yes. LEVEL is a multi-attribute standard similar to certifications like Cradle to Cradle or Living Product Challenge, but tailored for the commercial furniture industry with alignment to ANSI principles.

## **Q22: Where can I verify a product's LEVEL certification?**

BIFMA maintains a public registry at <https://level.bifma.org/> where users can search and verify product certifications by brand, product, or tier.

## **Q23: What should I look for in a LEVEL scorecard?**

The scorecard outlines the criteria achieved in environmental, material health, and social impact categories. It helps identify how the product aligns with organizational sustainability priorities.

## **Q24: Can I use LEVEL to support LEED or WELL building certification?**

Yes. LEVEL-certified products can contribute toward multiple credits in green building systems such as LEED and WELL, especially in material ingredient disclosure, low-emitting products, and social equity.

## **Q25: Are LEVEL certifications current or do they expire?**

Yes, LEVEL certifications are valid for three years. Updated documentation is required for recertification, and the registry reflects current status.

## **Q26: What's the difference between products labeled "LEVEL Certified" vs. "e3 Conformance"?**

"LEVEL Certified" indicates third-party verification. "e3 Conformance" may be a first- or second-party claim and does not carry the same rigor unless explicitly third-party verified