

This resource highlights examples of utility services and incentives that Better Buildings partners have leveraged to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings. Using this guide, organizations can work with their utility provider to better understand if these or other energy efficiency programs are available to them. Please note that the information within is meant to be general, recognizing that utility and energy efficiency programs vary by region and provider.

Energy Efficiency Services

Energy Audits

- ▶ An energy audit is a comprehensive diagnostic of your building's energy consumption to identify areas of improvement and prioritize efficiency upgrades. Energy audits typically take a whole-building approach by examining the envelope, systems, operations and maintenance procedures, and building schedule¹. When the audit is complete, building owners typically receive a report listing recommended energy efficiency upgrades. You can also request a summary of the available utility incentives, rebates, or tax credits for the proposed upgrades, as well as a list of recommended vendors and contractors.¹

Questions to ask your utility provider:

- Do you provide free energy audits? If not, what would an energy audit cost?
- Will the audit address the whole building (e.g. analyzing the building envelope, building systems) or will it target specific systems (e.g. lighting, ventilation, insulation, heating)?
- How are the findings from the audit communicated?
- Do you provide incentives or assistance for implementing audit recommendations?

Better Buildings Partner Examples:

- ▶ [City of Houston Texas - The Rose Building](#): Before considering a facility upgrade, the property team at The Rose Building worked with their local utility provider to conduct energy audits and identify cost-effective upgrade opportunities. The CenterPoint audit team came up with a list of 8 capital investment energy efficiency measures and 4 low- and no-cost operational measures. Incentives offered by the utility offset 20% of upfront project costs.
- ▶ [CommonBond Communities - Greenvale Place](#): By participating in the Multi-Family Energy Efficiency Program and working with their local utility provider, Greenvale Place received a full energy audit that identified a variety of projects and property management suggestions to reduce utility consumption. Through projects identified by the audit, Greenvale place has achieved 15% energy savings and saved \$9,800.

Benchmarking

- ▶ Tracking energy performance is essential for any organization interested in developing an energy management strategy, allowing you to better understand usage patterns and areas of improvement.² Benchmarking is the process of measuring a building's energy performance over time relative to itself or other similar buildings.² To benchmark a property you typically need 12

¹ https://www.pnnl.gov/main/publications/external/technical_reports/PNNL-20956.pdf

² <https://www.energystar.gov/buildings/facility-owners-and-managers/existing-buildings/use-portfolio-manager/get-started-benchmarking>

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months of utility consumption data (electric, gas, water) and gross floor area³. Benchmarking platforms like EPA's free-to-use [ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager](#)[®] allow users to quickly benchmark their property using utility bills and basic property information. View this [map](#) to see if your area has a benchmarking ordinance.

Questions to ask your utility provider:

- Do you provide whole-building energy data for benchmarking? How can I access this data?
- Do you provide automated benchmarking with ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager web services? (See a list of utilities that provide automated benchmarking [here](#))
- Can I access historical energy or water data for my property?
- Is there an online portal where I can view my energy or water consumption over time?

Better Buildings Partner Example:

- ▶ [Tampa Housing Authority - Utility Benchmarking: From Portfolio Manager Basics to Utility Data Uploads](#): This resource shows how Tampa Housing Authority successfully utilized existing Portfolio Manager training tools and templates to upload property data while simultaneously developing monthly data sharing protocols with their electric utility provider.

Utility Example:

- ▶ [Southern California Edison - Energy Benchmarking Program](#): Southern California Edison developed an automated benchmarking service to enable building owners to comply with benchmarking legislation and empower them to understand the energy usage of their buildings. Through this program SCE worked with 1,093 buildings with over 82 million square feet.

Education and Training

- ▶ Educational tools and trainings for energy efficiency can help an organization better understand opportunities for operational improvements. Utilities may offer resources in the form of webinars or newsletters. Additionally, utilities may encourage workforce development opportunities within customers' organizations so that their staff can better identify preventative maintenance procedures and efficiency opportunities.

Questions to ask your utility provider:

- Do you have any energy efficiency trainings and/or educational resources available to customers? If so, how can I access them? If not, do you recommend an alternative source for energy efficiency information?
- Do you offer reimbursements for successful completion of building operator trainings and/or certifications?

Utility Examples:

- ▶ [National Grid](#) has 4 energy efficiency newsletters covering the following topics: electrical and energy management, energy solution professional news, architects and engineers, and HVAC/R.
- ▶ [Xcel Energy's training tuition reimbursement program](#) offers rebates for Building Operator Certifications.

³ <https://portfoliomanager.energystar.gov/pm/dataCollectionWorksheet>

Financing and Incentives

Rebates

- ▶ A rebate is the return of a portion of the cost for a specific product or service given after the payment of the full invoice amount. There are typically 2 types of rebates offered: prescriptive and custom incentives. Prescriptive rebates have a fixed rate for a specific upgrade or product while the amount reimbursed using a custom incentive is based on the project results, such as energy savings. Many utilities provide rebates for ENERGY STAR-qualified or energy-efficient appliances. View a full list of [ENERGY STAR-qualified appliances](#) organized by product type.

Questions to ask your utility provider:

- What types of energy efficiency upgrades are eligible for rebates?
- What is the rebate and incentive deadline and what is the application process? Do I have to apply and get approved for the rebate before I make the purchase?
- Is the rebate a fixed rate or is it based on energy savings?

Better Buildings Partner Examples:

- ▶ [IHG Hotels - Holiday Inn Diamond Bar](#): IHG worked with their local water utility, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, and received \$100 rebates for each low-flow toilet they installed.
- ▶ [Loews Hotels – Vanderbilt Hotel](#): Loews researched available utility incentive programs and successfully worked with the local utility to receive \$125,000 in funding assistance for energy conservation measures resulting in 22% savings.

On-bill Financing and Repayment Structures

- ▶ On-bill financing (OBF) helps customers overcome the initial cost barrier associated with energy efficiency upgrades because the utility incurs the upfront cost of the upgrade, which is then repaid by the customer on their monthly utility bill.⁴ On-bill repayment (OBR) is like on-bill financing except that a third party provides the project capital. The benefits of OBF/OBR include low-to-zero interest rates, simple contract structure, and streamlined repayment. However, OBF and OBR are only available in regions where utilities support on-bill programs.⁵ On-bill programs may require that customers select from a list of pre-approved contractors to perform installation, and they can sometimes work in tandem with rebate programs to reduce the total cost that must be financed. Once the project is complete, the borrowed funds are repaid each month on the customer's utility bill for a set term that can range from 2 to 15 years.

Questions to ask your utility provider:

- Do you provide on-bill financing?
- What types of energy efficiency upgrades are eligible for on-bill financing?
- Do you provide on-bill repayment? If, so who are the third parties you partner with?
- What is the interest rate? Is there a required timeframe for repayment?
- Is there a project size cap?

⁴ <https://aceee.org/sector/state-policy/toolkit/on-bill-financing>

⁵ <https://betterbuildingssolutioncenter.energy.gov/financing-navigator/option/bill-financingrepayment>

Better Buildings Partner Example:

- ▶ [Hackensack Meridian Health – Utility Financing Partnership for Hospitals](#): Hackensack University Medical Center entered a strategic partnership with its utility company, which offers upfront funding for hospitals to implement energy efficiency projects with a buy-down incentive for certain efficiency measures and an on-bill repayment structure at 0% interest.

Demand Response and Load Shedding Programs

- ▶ To help manage high energy demand, demand response programs incentivize utility customers to reduce their energy load during peak hours or times of extreme weather events. Customers who participate in voluntary demand response programs are encouraged to decrease consumption during peak load hours, receiving reduced energy rates, rebates, or other financial incentives in return. Mandatory programs require customers to reduce electricity consumption during the demand response event period. Most demand response programs require the installation of metering technologies at the participating property so the utility can track energy use and send signals during peak demand times⁶.

Questions to ask your utility provider:

- Do you offer demand response programs? If so, is it mandatory or voluntary?
- Will I need metering or communication equipment in my building?
- How will demand response events be communicated to me?
- What savings or financial incentives are available when participating in a demand response program?

Better Buildings Partner Example:

- ▶ [UW Health - Building Automation System \(BAS\) Optimization Reduces Peak Load](#): UW Health enrolled in Wisconsin's Focus on Energy On-Demand Savings pilot program, which offered Madison Gas and Electric commercial customers tools to reduce electric load through their BAS during peak load summer months. By better managing the building demand, UW Health saved more than \$9,000 on utility bills from June to September 2016. The facilities also earned another \$22,000 in incentives from the On Demand Savings Program.

⁶ <http://www.mlgw.com/images/content/files/pdf/peakalertsDemandResponse101.pdf>