

Local Governments: An Overview of Energy Use and Energy Efficiency Opportunities



Energy Use in Local Governments

Government agencies spend more than \$10 billion a year on energy to provide public services and meet constituent needs. Local governments grapple with tightening budgets, but nearly one-third of the energy used to run typical government buildings goes to waste. EPA provides local governments a proven energy management strategy and tools to save energy and money and demonstrate their environmental leadership.

For any local government looking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within its jurisdiction, it is imperative that officials pay special attention to the buildings in the community. Opportunities to reduce the emissions in buildings are significant, since as much as 30 percent of the energy consumed in commercial buildings is often used unnecessarily or inefficiently.

Energy Efficiency Opportunities

Local governments can find energy savings through multiple efforts.

Low-Cost Measures

- > Measure and track energy performance.
- > Turn off lights when not in use or when natural daylight can be used.
- > Set back the thermostat in the evenings and other times when a building is unoccupied.
- > Perform monthly maintenance of heating and cooling equipment to guarantee efficient operation throughout the year.
- > Educate staff about how their behaviors affect energy use.

Cost-Effective Investments

- > Install energy-efficient lighting systems and controls that improve light quality and reduce heat gain.
- > Upgrade and maintain heating and cooling equipment. Replace chlorofluorocarbon chillers, retrofit or install energy-efficient models to meet a building's reduced cooling loads, and upgrade boilers and other central plant systems to energy-efficient standards.
- > Use a performance contract to guarantee energy savings from upgrades made.
- > Work with an energy services provider to help manage and improve energy performance.
- > Purchase energy-efficient products like ENERGY STAR qualified office equipment.
- > Install window films and add insulation or reflective roof coating to reduce energy consumption.

Local Governments Making a Difference:

Arlington County, Virginia, has been actively participating in the ENERGY STAR program since 1998. County officials view energy efficiency as the path to Green Buildings and have leveraged ENERGY STAR to achieve its efficiency goals. Arlington educates all community members — from developers to residents — about the importance of saving energy. Arlington has also hosted events to promote ENERGY STAR qualified products to help residents be more energy-efficient.

Fort Wayne, Indiana, is using Portfolio Manager to benchmark all of its facilities. For example, the city benchmarked all of its fire stations to help them understand energy use patterns in order to reduce energy waste.

How to Talk to Local Governments About Energy Efficiency

When talking to local government officials about energy efficiency, it is important to recognize the many different needs they must address for both their constituents and their own operations. Improving energy efficiency and spending less on utility bills can help free up resources so that local governments can more effectively provide the public services that their constituents expect while still operating efficiently themselves.

If you are seeking to engage local governments in improving their energy efficiency, the people to talk to are the county executive or mayor, director of management and budget, or energy manager. A local government's environmental board or sustainability council is also an important audience to engage.

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How to Talk to Local Governments About Energy Efficiency (cont.)

Securing a commitment from a high-ranking official helps ensure that their efforts have as broad and effective an impact as possible. Local governments must work with many different departments or agencies, each with their own unique set of challenges when it comes to implementing energy efficiency improvements.

The Dual Role of Local Governments: Leading by example and improving the energy efficiency of their own buildings is only part of what local governments can do to better their community through superior energy performance. It is important to illustrate to local government officials that they are in a unique position to educate their constituents about the benefits of energy efficiency. Local governments can also leverage their relationships with private sector organizations to motivate these groups to make energy efficiency improvements.

Join the ENERGY STAR Challenge: Encourage local governments to get started by joining the ENERGY STAR Challenge, which encourages building owners across the country to improve their energy efficiency by 10 percent or more. Local governments can join by visiting www.energystar.gov/challenge.

ENERGY STAR Offers

- Guides and manuals
- Facility benchmarking
- Training
- Institutional purchasing
- Technical support
- Financing resources
- Emissions reporting
- Third-party recognition
- Motivational campaigns

ENERGY STAR Resources

Guidelines for Energy Management: Based on the successful practices of ENERGY STAR partners, these guidelines can assist local governments in improving their energy and financial performance while establishing themselves as environmental leaders.

Portfolio Manager — Measure and Track Energy Performance: By measuring, setting goals, and tracking energy use, local governments can gain control of energy expenses. They can rate their energy performance on a scale of 1 to 100 relative to similar buildings nationwide.

www.energystar.gov/benchmark

Perform Cost-effective Building Upgrades: Plan systematic building upgrades using the 5-stage approach in EPA's Building Upgrade Manual. This online handbook offers guidance for each stage, from commissioning to plant upgrades.

www.energystar.gov/bldgmanual

Recognition for Achievements

Earn the ENERGY STAR: Buildings that rate in the top 25 percent of energy-efficient buildings in the nation may qualify for the ENERGY STAR.

www.energystar.gov/eslabel

ENERGY STAR Awards: Organizations that continuously achieve and promote superior energy management can apply to be recognized as part of the annual ENERGY STAR Awards.

www.energystar.gov/awards

Other Resources for Local Governments:

The U.S. Conference of Mayors (www.usmayors.org): The U.S. Conference of Mayors helps mayors reduce greenhouse gas emissions in cities through outreach, education, and technical assistance.

The National Association of Counties (www.naco.org): NACo helps county officials to improve the energy performance of their buildings, specifically through the ENERGY STAR Courthouse Campaign.

Public Technology Institute (www.pti.org): PTI is working with EPA to help cities and counties meet their climate change goals and to support other green and sustainable efforts.

International City/County Management Association (www.icma.org): ICMA's Local Government Environmental Assistance Network (LGEAN) is an information clearinghouse that provides relevant energy efficiency and environmental management information for local government officials and their staffs.

ICLEI — Local Governments for Sustainability (www.iclei.org): ICLEI helps local authorities worldwide move from agenda to action and ensure an accelerated implementation of sustainable development.

Visit www.energystar.gov/government for more information on ENERGY STAR resources and recognition.

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