



Improve Energy Data Access

The key to enabling efficiency retrofits

What is holding back cost effective energy efficiency in commercial buildings?

USGBC is focused on making green building the market norm, and the only way to achieve that goal is by ensuring that every commercial building is at the very least, not wasting energy. Every sector of the building industry shares this goal, but progress has been frustratingly illusive. Through engagement with USGBC, many of the leading building owners and operators in energy efficiency have consistently highlighted an inability collect whole building energy data as the greatest barrier to achieving better efficiency throughout their portfolios. Access to building energy data enables building benchmarking and then retrofit implementation. It starts with data access. (Also see USGBC's campaign, [Mainstream Building Benchmarking](#).)

Unleash the Industry through Data Access

Many commercial and multifamily building owners and operators would like to benchmark their buildings' energy performance in order to identify opportunities to slash energy consumption and energy bills through efficiency improvements. But getting access to the building energy consumption data to begin the benchmarking process is often difficult or impossible. Obstacles that stand in the path of an increased energy data flow include:

- **Divide between building landlord/manager and tenant:** Landlords may have access to the energy data of the common areas, but not the tenant spaces in a multi-tenant building. Utility companies may not be willing to provide the whole building energy information to the building owner for legal reasons or without tenant consent. In most cases, the concerns are overblown.
- **Tenant Apprehension** – Tenants are often hesitant to provide the landlord with their energy data or allow whole building energy data collection, for fear of energy costs justifying increased leasing rates.
- **Slow Utility Responsiveness** – Even if the landlord/manager has tenant consent for partial or whole building energy information, often the utility does not respond to this request for information. From the utility's perspective, there is no benefit to providing this information, they may fear legal risk, or do not have a sufficient data sharing platform to communicate the information.
- **Lack of Collection Infrastructure** – In some buildings, the meters are not installed to collect the information needed to benchmark a building.



How to Unlock Energy Data

USGBC advocates can play several roles in aiding commercial building owners and operators in their quest for energy data. In order to mainstream benchmarking, this initiative will seek to bring important players in the industry together to identify workable solutions. Specifically, concentrate advocacy efforts in the following ways:

- **Initiate Conversations:** As the main target for this campaign is the local utility, advocates should identify appropriate contacts with the utility and bring them together with local building owners, managers, and tenants who are struggling with energy data access. Focus on why an increase in energy data sharing information makes sense for local building owners, talk about how to share aggregated information to reduce privacy concerns, and coordinate on appropriate data sharing systems.
- **Listen:** While greater access to whole building energy data may make sense to building owners and managers, focus on understanding the reasons why the utility may be hesitant to act. Common reasons include cost, resource allocation, and legal concerns. Work to address specific concerns through dialogue with owner and tenant stakeholders, and potentially policy makers and utility regulators.
- **Cooperation:** Help utilities convince their regulators of the energy savings benefits of facilitating benchmarking. Working closely with elected officials can often help navigate the landscape.
- **Educate Decision Makers:** Well-informed decision makers with a supportive constituency may be the most effective in driving change. Identify champions to help build coalitions and bring parties together.



The Role of Policy Makers

In any advocacy campaign, policy makers make strong allies. While policy makers can require or encourage public utility commissions to unlock energy data access among the utilities they oversee, their impact can be important in other ways: convening stakeholders, elevating the profile of the issue, or even providing advice or strategic connections to make energy data access a reality. See [here](#) for draft legislative text.

Month Year	Total Monthly Usage (kWh)
Jan 2008	995
Feb 2008	880
Mar 2008	804
Apr 2008	507
May 2008	647
Jun 2008	904
Jul 2008	1,187
Aug 2008	1,843
Sep 2008	888
Oct 2008	1,315
Nov 2008	909
Dec 2008	1,311
Total	12,190

Chicago-based utility ComEd is a great example of a utility unlocking building energy data for customers that are struggling to find the necessary building energy information to make smart efficiency upgrades to their buildings. See examples of other utility-developed systems below under "Individual Utilities."

Resources

- **DATA: The Data Access and Transparency Alliance:** A joint initiative of USGBC, the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA), the Real Estate Roundtable, and the Institute for Market Transformation (IMT), the Alliance promotes access to whole building energy consumption information. (<http://www.energydataalliance.org/>)
- **National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC):** NARUC is on record passing a [resolution](#) in support of allowing access for whole building energy data.
- **Individual Utilities:** Utilities such as [ComEd](#), [ConEd](#), [Avista](#), [Seattle City Light](#), [Austin Energy](#), [Puget Sound Energy](#) and [Pacific Gas & Electric](#) are piloting innovative policies and web tools to enable data access. ComEd (see image above) produced a [WebEx presentation](#) on their [Energy Usage Data System \(EUDS\)](#) which shares data with building owners allowing for automated benchmarking and easy upload to Energy Star Portfolio Manager.
- USGBC's [draft legislative text](#) for state or local governments to improve building energy data access.

For more information on USGBC's *Improve Energy Data Access* campaign, contact Matt Pearce, Campaign Specialist, at mpearce@usgbc.org. For more information on USGBC's advocacy campaigns, visit www.usgbc.org/campaigns.