

# Occupant Engagement Handbook



A comprehensive guide for  
engaging occupants and  
encouraging conservation  
behaviors

Prepared by the Energy Education Program  
at Energy Outreach Colorado



**ENERGY  
OUTREACH  
COLORADO**  
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Taking meaningful steps to conserve energy can lead to benefits for your organization and the broader community.

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**Large energy bills can use up funds that could go towards helping the community you serve.** While efficiency upgrades will help lower your annual utility bills, you can save even more by engaging building occupants (staff, volunteers, residents, program participants, etc.) and taking steps together to reduce energy use.

According to Energystar.gov, **50% of a building's total energy use comes from plug loads, lighting, and HVAC, which are often controlled by building occupants.** Small changes by your community can lead to big annual energy savings.

Reducing energy use not only **saves money**, but also **extends the life of your equipment**, and contributes to the community by **reducing carbon emissions and air pollution**. By committing to conserving energy, your organization can promote itself as being responsible in your community, which can draw more funders and more engaged staff.

Use this guide to develop a community engagement strategy and maximize savings through energy conservation!

# Getting Started

**Time to get organized! Take the steps below to develop a game plan and get occupants excited about saving energy.**

## Step 1: Understand your reasons for saving energy

Decide on your main motivations for wanting to save energy. Clarifying these reasons early will help keep your occupants engaged and excited to continue saving energy.

Write down your top motivations and return to them regularly, especially when occupants need an extra push to continue taking action.

### Motivations may include:

- 1** Saving money on energy bills to invest back in your community
- 2** Reducing emissions to help the environment and to conserve resources
- 3** Reducing air pollution and improving community health

**Our Top Motivation is:**

## Step 2: Collect Materials

After understanding why you want to save energy, it's time to gather information about your building and your current energy use that can help determine your priorities when taking action.

### Materials to collect include:

#### Energy Bills

Your bills will demonstrate your current usage and help you set an energy-saving goal. Download usage data from your utility online account.

#### "Understanding your Energy Bills" Document

This guide from Energy Outreach Colorado will help you understand your bills, and make sure you are not paying extra fees.

#### Efficiency Upgrade Information

EOC provides material explaining installed efficiency upgrades and connects each with conservation actions. Collect this and any other information on recent efficiency upgrades in your building.

#### Past Energy Audit Information, etc.

Gather any additional information on equipment in your building and any past energy audit analysis (if applicable).

# Getting Buy-In

## Step 3: Reach Out to Building Occupants (Residents, Staff, Volunteers, etc.)

To save the most energy, you need to have assistance from your building occupants: staff, volunteers, residents, students, or anyone else sharing use of the space. These partners can help you identify areas where energy can be saved, and can motivate others to save energy.

### Explain benefits of saving energy:

Begin by talking with occupants about the benefits of saving energy. Allow them to add in their input and explain what messages and actions by leadership would motivate them the most to commit to conserving energy.

### Identify energy champions:

Ask for volunteers to help promote these efforts with others. Not everyone will immediately be on board, but having a few champions will help take pressure off leadership and allow occupants to take ownership over conservation practices.

### Share info on current energy usage:

Share the documents you collected in Step 2 with occupants at a staff meeting or brownbag lunch. Discuss current energy usage, energy goals, info about any efficiency upgrades, and ask for ideas for conservation. Reach out to the EOC Energy Education team for presentation slides that can assist you, or schedule a presentation by the EOC Education Team.

## Step 4: Start a Green Team

Work with conservation leaders and champions at your organization to create a Green Team. Provide the team with info on current use and allow time for them to have meetings to discuss conservation actions.



### Allow Green Team to set conservation priorities

Begin to identify areas in which energy conservation actions could be implemented. You may want to focus on putting together a list of top actions that would apply to most workspaces, residences, etc.



### Have team take inventory of current use

Search for energy waste, such as unnecessary lighting, hot or cold spots in the buildings, or equipment that is often running while not in use.



### Ask the team to analyze climate control

Poll occupants on reasonable temperatures, revisit dress code, eliminate space heaters, and implement procedures for adjusting temperature when building is unoccupied.



### Encourage the team to connect actions to benefits

Money savings, environmental and health benefits, or other motivating factors you've identified. This could also include discussing health and wellness benefits of actions, like reducing eye strain by implementing better lighting.

# Staying Motivated

## Step 4: Building Green Company Culture

Long-term energy savings require a commitment by leadership at your organization. Take the following steps to help emphasize the importance of conservation and keep building occupants motivated:

### Update all occupants regularly on progress:

Have the Green Team present monthly or quarterly on top actions and progress towards energy goals. Send emails or newsletters with updates on progress and seasonal tips to cut energy use at work and at home. You can also use this as a platform to highlight successes and shine a spotlight on energy champions.

### Provide incentives or rewards:

Good work deserves a pat on the back. Great work deserves a prize, preferably given in front of an audience. Whether it is a coffee mug or a check, incentives and recognition are great ways to motivate your occupants or employees to achieve even greater energy savings. It is not all just selfless giving though. By providing incentives and recognition, you will help sustain momentum and support for your program.

### Clearly advertise energy goals to building occupants:

Email, post online, or publicly display the past 6–12 months of energy use information in high-traffic areas (such as meeting spaces, lobbies, bathrooms, elevators, etc.)

- Seeing the data and trends in energy use can inspire occupants and employees to keep saving.
- Update the data monthly to keep employees informed about your progress toward achieving energy goals.

### Promote your efforts to external supporters of your organization.

- Send out info about your conservation savings to donors, your board, friends, and/or the media.
- Add a conservation update to external newsletters, promotional emails, etc.
- Describe how energy savings help your organization save money that you invest back into your mission.
- Mention your commitment to energy savings in job postings to attract more engaged and motivated staff.

# Get In Touch

We hope this guide helps you get organized and ready to save energy! For additional assistance, feel free to reach out to the Energy Outreach Colorado Education Team.

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Energy Outreach Colorado leads a network of industry, state and local partners to **Support**, **Stabilize** and **Sustain** Coloradans to afford their energy needs.

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