



# Improving Multifamily Energy Management Through Stakeholder Engagement

A successful energy management program relies on multiple organizational factors, including top-level support, a system to track and manage utility data and costs, and an internal team comprised of key staff responsible for building and implementing an energy management strategy, among other elements. Building this foundation takes time, and requires investments in technologies, processes, and people. To fully maximize this investment, and to realize the savings and environmental goals set by the organization, successful owners and managers actively engage with internal and external stakeholders to ensure that all parties that have an impact on energy usage have the opportunity to positively contribute. This document is intended to give examples of some of the multifamily industry's best practices for engaging employees and customers to achieve better results, and where ENERGY STAR® tools and resources can help.

## Ways to Engage with Internal Staff

**Train and educate team members.** It is surprising just how many individuals within an organization can have a positive impact on its energy management and environmental practices. Employees who have a direct impact on operations or the customer experience can play a large role in determining the effectiveness of an energy management strategy, and implementing some form of a training program for these individuals can provide a solid foundation. It is important to evaluate all internal staffing groups and ask if and how they can impact the success of an energy management program and determine what needs to be done to maximize their effectiveness. Here are a few specific ideas:

- Incorporate energy management content into any training conducted as part of the **employee onboarding** process so that each new hire receives a primer on organizational environmental goals and priorities.
- Ensure **Leasing Agents** receive training on how to communicate the benefits of an energy efficient apartment community to prospective residents. Overall utility costs may be lower for residents, and positive messages around lower environmental impact can only help position the property better. If a property is ENERGY STAR® certified, that may be a clear way to point to a property's superior performance.
- Providing educational training for **Facilities & Maintenance teams** can help demonstrate the business case for driving efficiency and identify how their daily responsibilities can impact overall energy reduction goals, particularly when it comes to actions like preventative maintenance and identifying low and no-cost efficiency improvements.

The ENERGY STAR Program offers free [training resources](#) including live and on demand webinars, short videos on using ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager, and a variety of useful guides that cover various topic areas. Multifamily organizations can leverage these to help implement the above best practices.

## Partner Highlight



CA Ventures incorporates ENERGY STAR best practices, products, and solutions extensively across all operational aspects of its assets. It trains onsite teams through its “Sustainable Operating Guidelines for Property Management”, and conducts ENERGY STAR-inspired initiatives related to resident engagement & communication campaigns, energy saving tips, and products. It further conducts periodic in-house energy audits in accordance with the latest ENERGY STAR recommendations, which allow for increased energy efficiency in its buildings, leading to higher ENERGY STAR scores and more properties becoming eligible for ENERGY STAR certification; a core goal of the organization.

**Recognizing staff** contributions to energy efficiency can be a great motivator to drive additional improvement. This could include giving internal recognition through a corporate announcement, acknowledging significant achievements as part of an employee awards program, or if you have the budget, including some financial incentives in the form of bonuses or gift certificates. Several companies even have energy efficiency goals and achievements as part of the annual performance review process for key staff. Not only will this provide a clear message that these efforts are strongly valued by management, but giving credit to those staff members who may have their contributions otherwise go unnoticed can be a great motivational tool, and is surely appreciated.

## Partner Highlight



MetLife Investment Management uses its [ESG Challenge Award](#) to encourage properties in their portfolio to earn recognition for success in energy reduction, for use of ENERGY STAR tools and resources, and for other environmental, social, and governance initiatives. [Main Street Village](#), located in Irvine, CA, won the MetLife Investment Management ESG Challenge Award by promoting its ENERGY STAR certification to residents, reducing overall energy usage by upgrading to LED lights and installing smart thermostats, and sharing environmental policy communications with their community.

**Utilize competitions and collaborative events** as creative ways to engage staff and motivate them to find energy savings opportunities. Try engaging property teams with a month-long energy competition to see who can save the most energy and water. ENERGY STAR Partners have had great success over the years hosting company-wide energy challenges, which put a fun spin on energy efficiency and often result in significant savings. Check out our materials on [how to host your own competition](#). Additionally, an event such as an [Energy Treasure Hunt](#), where property teams walk around a facility looking for energy savings opportunities, is a great collaborative way to build a supportive culture around energy efficiency and at the same time serve as an effective tool to help identify low and no-cost savings opportunities. By involving representatives from different parts of the organization, such as maintenance staff, property managers, and financial decision makers, Energy Treasure Hunts often result in more identified savings opportunities and higher project implementation rates. Use the [Energy Treasure Hunt How-To Guide](#) to get started, and when you are ready to go on your hunt you can leverage additional ENERGY STAR resources including the [ENERGY STAR treasure map for multifamily](#) facilities and the [excel detail sheet](#) to track identified opportunities.



## Partner Highlight



Bozzuto Management Company found success in conducting its first ENERGY STAR Treasure Hunt and took the innovative approach to integrate the process into its quarterly building inspection for its clients. By leveraging its maintenance software platform used in standard walkthroughs, Bozzuto's property teams now have the ability to identify low- and no-cost energy savings opportunities as part of normal business operations, which will contribute to its goal of improving and maintaining high performance at its managed properties.

## Ways to Engage with Residents

**Educate your current residents.** Residents are ultimately responsible for most of the energy consumption in a multifamily property, and thus can have a big impact on the overall energy performance of your properties. It is often the case that small decisions and behaviors can add up to make significant impacts, so start by sharing energy savings tips that the residents can easily implement during their daily lives. [ENERGY STAR® certified products and appliances](#) and [WaterSense](#) fixtures already are more efficient than their non-certified counterparts, so encourage residents to purchase them where possible. For units that already contain these products, or if you are making other energy efficiency improvements at the property, take the opportunity to educate residents on how these decisions have a positive impact on the environment. Some great times to communicate include during seasonal changes, during social events, during significant celebrations like Earth Day or Energy Awareness Month (October), or even through a sustainability section in a property newsletter. You can also spread the message through social media posts, or posters and flyers in the lobby or elevators; all of which can help motivate the resident to make conscious decisions as well as demonstrate the organization's commitment to its environmental or climate-related goals.

## Partner Highlight



Greystar offers its Sustainable Living Guide to residents to help demonstrate ways they can contribute to a more sustainable environment through energy saving, water conservation, waste reduction, and other environmental efforts. This includes several tips on what residents can do in their units, such as selecting ENERGY STAR certified products to reduce energy use, as well as ways they can impact the community, through suggestions like making environmentally conscious purchase decisions and using alternative transportation where possible. Demonstrating that residents can make a positive impact through several no- and low-cost activities is a great way to help them integrate sustainability into their daily routines and support the overall efforts at the property.

**Attract Prospective Residents.** While energy efficiency will likely always come after location and rental cost when it comes to where a resident chooses to live, it remains a positive value-add and differentiator that property owners should be promoting. Residents are increasingly aware of their impact on the environment, and numerous consumer surveys demonstrate that these considerations play a role when making purchase decisions. Increase awareness by advertising information about the added value, features, and benefits of your efficient property. ENERGY STAR certified products have a host of benefits in addition to energy savings, so make a note of these during resident tours and in model units. The ENERGY STAR logo is recognized among the top consumer brands in the U.S., consistently registering over 95% consumer recognition. Properties that have received ENERGY STAR certification should take advantage of this positive recognition by notifying residents when certification is achieved and displaying the ENERGY STAR decal in a high traffic area to advertise its status as a high-performing building. Property websites or other marketing materials should also be



reviewed to make sure sustainability features are visible to renters, and logos like the ENERGY STAR certification mark or the ENERGY STAR Partner mark (if your organization has applied for partnership) are fairly easy to add and carry a lot of recognition value.

ENERGY STAR has developed a [co-brandable leasing brochure](#) that can be used to inform your prospective residents about the value of living in an ENERGY STAR certified community, and the actions your organization is taking to improve efficiency. If your property is not ENERGY STAR certified, there is an [alternate version](#) that can be used as well to call out any environmentally focused features.



## Partner Highlight

AML Residential conducts an annual survey of its residents, known as its Sustainable Living Index, which has consistently shown that its renters are placing additional emphasis on living in communities with green or environmentally friendly features.

AML believes that highlighting a community's energy efficient features helps with attracting potential residents, so it trains all leasing agents to educate prospective renters about the value of ENERGY STAR certified buildings and products. To help reinforce this training AML hires third-party shoppers to evaluate how the leasing team shares information about the community's sustainability features.

**Think of creative ways to promote your successful energy management program.** There are several additional ways you can communicate to stakeholders. Issue a press release announcing your achievement and distribute it to local media. Develop case studies that highlight how your building is leveraging ENERGY STAR to improve building performance. Illustrate best practices, lessons learned, and promote energy performance achievements to property teams. Communication campaigns can be creative and fun and can help unite those inside and outside the organization to contribute to your greater goals. Refer to the [ENERGY STAR Communications Toolkit](#) for additional communication ideas, resources, and information.

---

For more resources and materials, please visit the [ENERGY STAR for Existing Multifamily Housing](#) site.

Visit the [ENERGY STAR Help Center](#) for more information about benchmarking your multifamily property and Portfolio Manager guidance.