GETTING STARTED

Virtually any congregational facility can improve its energy efficiency easily and cost-effectively, using the numerous resources that are available both from ENERGY STAR, as well as, a wide variety of other organizations. These resources are available to help you through the process of completing an upgrade. This process can be broken into major activities that are involved in carrying out an energy improvement project.

Major Activities

GETTING STARTED: IDENTIFYING PROJECTS

As the saying goes, “time is money” and that can be particularly true for congregational facilities. However, not taking time (to save energy) can mean big money lost that could be used for other outreach and stewardship initiatives.

Reduction in daily energy costs and monthly utility bills for the lifetime of your facility can make it well worth the time needed to pursue effective-efficiency upgrades. Here are some strategies to jump-start your energy savings:

- Ask your utility if they offer free or inexpensive energy audits and/or rebates for energy-efficiency upgrades. A good place to start is the Energy Crossroads Web site **(EXIT>)** - a consolidated listing, by state, of many of the utility energy-efficiency programs.
- Invite contractors to your facility to suggest upgrades and provide free estimates.
- Contract with an energy professional to coordinate and manage your project.
- Leverage your time by drawing on the expertise of ENERGY STAR by visiting its Congregations Web site.

GETTING STARTED: FINDING FUNDS

Access to capital for an energy-efficiency upgrade need not be an issue. Some upgrades require little funding. For those that do require investment, don't worry; there are many traditional and non-traditional financial resources available. A well-designed upgrade can provide your facility a positive cash flow from energy savings while paying off the investment for new equipment.

For small, inexpensive projects, you may want to use your own internal funds to pay for the upgrade. Depending on your congregation's finances, this could come from your savings, operating budget, or funding raising initiatives. For larger jobs, financing might be the only way to pay for the upgrade. Fortunately, a variety of sources and mechanisms exist to help finance energy-efficiency improvement projects.

Did You Know?

Energy-efficient upgrades typically save you money that can be used to pay for the cost of projects.

It's your decision to weigh your competing needs for funds versus continuing increases in operating costs for energy. Remember – even a long-term investment on energy efficiency results in affordable comfort, and new, more reliable equipment that will pay for itself with energy savings. Strategic energy-efficiency investments are your hedge against the certainty of higher utility bills that you cannot control.

The following resources can help you find funding information and opportunities for your upgrade:

To help you locate special offers and rebates in your area, ENERGY STAR provides an online zip code driven tool. Another resource for incentives and rebates is the DSIRE Database for State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency.

ENERGY STAR's Resources: Finance, Products & Services Web page

ENERGY STAR's Directory of Energy Efficiency Programs (DEEP)

ENERGY STAR's Buildings Upgrade Manual - Financing Section **(PDF)**

(EXIT>)

Energy Crossroads

DOE's Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy's Financial Opportunities

National Association of State Energy Officials' "State and Territory Energy Offices" Web page

Alliance to Save Energy's Financing Energy Efficiency Web page

Local Government Commission's Funding Opportunities

Another aspect of funding energy efficiency is group purchasing to achieve lower unit prices on efficient equipment with volume purchases. Read more about this strategy in ENERGY STAR's Group Purchasing Fact Sheet **(PDF)**

GETTING STARTED: SELECTING CONTRACTORS

The selection of experienced, competent contractors and other energy professionals is critical to the success of your energy-efficiency project(s). Here are some guidelines to aid you in choosing a contractor:

- Ask for multiple current references that you can contact about work the contractor performed.
- Ask the contractor to provide a cost-estimate in writing for any work they will do.
- Make sure they are licensed and insured contractor.
- The contractor should certify that their work conforms to state and local regulations and codes.
- Verify that the contractor carries workers' compensation insurance.
- Make sure the contractor has experience and will use energy-efficient equipment.

Visit ENERGY STAR's online "Service and Product Provider Directory" and search for contractors and energy professionals in your area to help you with your upgrade(s).

Check the following sources for additional tips on selecting a contractor:

ENERGY STAR's 10 Tips for Hiring a Heating and Cooling Contractor **(EXIT>)**

California Energy Commission's How To Hire An Energy Services Company Handbook **(PDF)**

California Energy Commission's How To Hire An Energy Auditor To Identify Energy Efficiency Projects Handbook **(PDF)**

State of Oregon Construction Contractors Board Consumer Help

Did You Know?

Many contractor associations offer valuable information and advice on selecting a contractor, and a directory of listings. For example, visit the Air Conditioning Contractors of America **(EXIT >)** Web site.

The members of your congregation may also find the following resources useful:

ENERGY STAR's Recommendations for Finding a Contractor

Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory's Home Energy Saver **(EXIT>)**

GETTING STARTED: PRIORITIZING PROJECTS

You may wonder, "Where should I start?" Do I replace one piece of equipment or system at a time? Or, should I do a comprehensive upgrade of my entire facility? The answer will vary depending on each individual facility's situation. The age of your current equipment and facility systems, your type facility, your local utility rates, your hours of operation, and your access to financial resources are all key factors in what level of upgrade makes sense. One place to start is with low-cost and no-cost changes such as those listed in the Sure Energy Savers section of this guide.

If cash flow is an issue, you may want to wait until a piece of equipment or system fails or is a certain number of years old before replacing it with an energy-efficient model. However, if you are building a new facility or doing a major remodel, you should incorporate energy-efficient upgrades into your design due to the lower incremental cost of "doing it right the first time." For an existing facility, it may come down to what is financially feasible for your facility at a particular time. Ask your contractor if they can assist you in prioritizing your energy-efficiency projects.

In addition, the following resources may be helpful to you:

ENERGY STAR's Cash Flow Opportunity (CFO) Calculator

ENERGY STAR's Building Upgrade Manual's Business Analysis Section **(PDF)**

(EXIT>)

DOE's Building Technologies Program's Planning and Financing Your Project

GETTING STARTED: MANAGING PROJECTS

The size and complexity of the energy-efficiency project your congregation undertakes will most likely be the main factor in deciding who will manage the project. For something as simple as replacing HVAC filters or replacing incandescent lamps (light bulbs) with ENERGY STAR compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs), you, your staff or members could do it yourselves. Depending on the skills available to you, installing caulking and weather-stripping, ceiling fans, occupancy sensors for lights, LED exit signs, and programmable thermostats may be "do-it-yourself" projects not requiring outside help.

A more complex project, such as designing and replacing your facility's entire lighting system, will require the help of someone who has experience managing that type of project. Here are some resources to assist you in the process of managing your energy-efficiency projects:

ENERGY STAR's Create Action Plan

ENERGY STAR's New Building Design

California Energy Commission's How to Hire a Construction Manager For Your Energy Efficiency Projects Handbook **(PDF)**

As your facility implements energy-efficient projects it is good practice to continuously assess energy performance to ensure that savings are being achieved. ENERGY STAR offers tools to help you understand and assess your facility's energy performance.