

## Establish data sharing relationships as early as possible

Though potentially challenging, establishing relationships for sharing energy consumption data is critical for evaluating program impact on energy and cost savings. Many Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners found success by approaching utilities during the program planning phase, or at least several months in advance of when they planned to start collecting data, to outline shared goals, assets, tools, needs and constraints. Clear and concise data requests helped speed up utilities' response times for providing the data and alleviated utility concerns and questions regarding data needs.

- [Energize Phoenix](#) [1] formed a partnership with the local electric utility, Arizona Public Service (APS), while designing the program and coordinated with them throughout program development. Energize Phoenix found that understanding Arizona Public Service's concerns and challenges related to data sharing was a key ingredient in forging a successful partnership, as was instituting a formal agreement to clarify roles and responsibilities.
- [Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance](#) [2] (SEEA) found that not all of their programs were successful in obtaining utility bill data. Common obstacles included that the utility did not have the technology infrastructure to easily export the information, would only release data for a fee (based on how many records were pulled), or simply did not have the time or resources to provide the information even if the program had a signed client release form from the homeowner. Among SEEA's programs, those that were most successful in obtaining utility billing information—including [NOLA WISE](#) [3] in New Orleans, Louisiana; [Local Energy Alliance Program](#) [4] (LEAP) in Charlottesville, Virginia; Atlanta SHINE in Atlanta, Georgia; and [DecaturWISE](#) [5] in Decatur, Georgia - consulted with the utilities to determine what information the program needed to include in the client release form. Additionally, some programs developed a written memorandum of understanding with the utility specifying data collection and transfer roles and responsibilities. SEEA programs also found it best to make data requests to utilities on a quarterly basis to minimize the burden on the utility as many utilities do not have staff dedicated to data exporting. Some programs received data more frequently, but in these situations the utility had the means to easily pull and export data.
- When local utilities Philadelphia Gas Works (PGW) and Philadelphia Electric Company (PECO) shared customers' energy usage data with [EnergyWorks](#) [6], all parties made sure that the proper data sharing requirements were observed and all parties signed the necessary forms. Philadelphia EnergyWorks built its customer data release approval language into the [program's loan application form](#) [7] to minimize the number of additional forms that a customer or contractor would need to handle.
- [EnergySmart](#) [8] in Eagle County, Colorado, successfully developed partnerships with utilities during and after the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program grant period, but in hindsight found it would have been more beneficial to engage utilities prior to submitting the original DOE grant application. By not fully engaging utilities up front, EnergySmart created the following environment where the utilities are only partially included in the program and retained similar or redundant in-house services. As EnergySmart continued forward, they were able to gain the trust of the utility by offering help, data, and information. EnergySmart also shared their results with the utility's management and board of directors. Through this gained trust, utilities were more willing to share data.

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## Links

[1] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/phoenix-energizes-light-rail-corridor-upgrades>

[2] <http://www.seealliance.org/seeainitiatives/project-archive/better-buildings/>

[3] <http://www.nolawise.org/>

[4] <http://leap-va.org/>

[5] <http://www.decaturga.com/about/sustainability/decaturwise-residential-rebate-program>

[6] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/upgrades-work-philadelphia-s-historic-buildings>

[7] [http://www1.eere.energy.gov/buildings/betterbuildings/neighborhoods/pdfs/keystone\\_help\\_loan\\_application.pdf](http://www1.eere.energy.gov/buildings/betterbuildings/neighborhoods/pdfs/keystone_help_loan_application.pdf)

[8] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/resort-communities-get-smart-upgrades>