

## Get Helpful Tips for Collecting Utility Data

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Grantees are being asked to upload energy usage data by May 31. With that deadline quickly approaching, you might be wondering how to work with your utilities to access energy usage data. Your first step should be to contact your utility to establish a data exchange partnership. Do your homework first by researching what programs your utility already offers and how you might approach them with an offer (maybe marketing or outreach to their customers) and an ask (data request). A great place to start mining for information is the utility's website or the [Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency](#). When you're ready to contact the utility, be prepared with a detailed ask so the utility is clear on what you're looking for, and if possible share some of the benefits your program can offer the utility, such as engaging with customers.

[Connecticut's Neighbor to Neighbor \(N2N\) Energy Challenge](#) successfully established a partnership with their utility and suggests the following tips for a successful relationship:

- **Host a kick off meeting to get on the same page about expectations.** Within the first few weeks of their partnership, N2N held a kickoff meeting with Northeast Utilities (NU) and began discussing the data needed. In addition to the individual household usage data that the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program requires, N2N wanted to collect community-wide aggregate usage data, and historical community-wide data on participation in state efficiency programs in N2N's towns. This kickoff meeting helped N2N to ensure that its data needs were within the realms of what NU was able to share.
- **Allow ample time for negotiations and technical processing.** The process to access data can take time and patience. For Connecticut, the process took six months of negotiation and additional two months of development. In addition to figuring out how to release the data, which included many legal issues, both parties had to work with their IT security departments to allow electronic access to the data. In the end, N2N's patience paid off as NU worked with its IT staff to provide regular data in a meaningful format for N2N.
- **Be flexible.** On the first Monday of the month, N2N gives NU utility account numbers for residents who have agreed to share their data. NU provides usage data for these homeowners to N2N by the last day of the month. Although N2N originally hoped to have access to utility data on a more frequent basis, N2N recognizes the need to work within a utility partner's technical and operating environment.
- **In the agreement with the utility, explain where the data will be shared.** To ensure that further negotiations weren't required, N2N included in its agreement with NU the utility data uses, which included sharing data with the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program. N2N requires a non-disclosure agreement with any approved partner accessing utility usage data.

Despite the involved process, gaining access to data was worthwhile for N2N. N2N created a strong relationship with NU at the beginning of the process, so the NU team was helpful, professional, and willing to invest the time necessary to help N2N collect utility data.