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Bright Power Scorecards Help Nonprofits Grade Green Improvements

Today, public housing agencies (PHAs) across the Nation are making green improvements. Yet for many the question of whether these improvements are having the desired effect remains unanswered. The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) may have resolved this problem with its utilization of energy scorecards from Bright Power, a green energy firm based in New York. The software, which details property energy use in letter grades and numbers, creates a clear benchmark for green improvements.

As stated on the Bright Power-affiliated Web site, <http://Energyscorecards.com>, the scorecards work by collecting basic property information: address, building type, square footage, and number of occupants, as well as a year of utility history from electricity, natural gas, oil, propane, or water bills. The company then takes the property and utility information provided and performs a regression analysis against the property's local daily weather data.

According to David Evans, the Assistant Executive Director of Multifamily Housing, the PHFA was introduced to the scorecards through Stewards for Affordable Housing for the Future (SAHF). SAHF is a collection of nine social enterprise nonprofit organizations, which provide affordable housing for 90,000 people in all 50 States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico (www.sahfnet.org). Seven years ago the organization's members saw the need to benchmark their energy consumption. "It became increasingly clear that energy costs were a significant driver of overall costs and members needed to address their energy use," said Richard Samson, President, SAHF Energy Division.

In 2007, SAHF sought out Bright Power which specializes in energy audits. Bright Power aggregated and organized SAHF's energy information, creating letter grades for energy efficiency. An "A" reflected the top quartile and a "D" reflected the bottom quartile. During this process, the vision of scorecards began to come into view. "In the course of putting the spreadsheet together, Bright Power found there was software here that was worth developing," said Samson.

The scorecards have proved useful to the PHFA which formed a collaboration with Action Housing, a Pennsylvania-based nonprofit organization, and offered a contract to Bright Power for the scorecard technology. "One group [Action Housing] will enter data from their property invoices and we enter data from our energy audits. Bright Power tweaks where it needs to," said Evans describing the partnerships. In working with the scorecards since March of this year, Action Housing has received energy information on 30 developments and the PHFA received information for 50.

With the information they gathered, Evans reports that developers can now compare contemporary energy use building by building within their property so developers can discern patterns in a development's energy consumption. The PHFA's goal is to extend this benchmarking technology even further. "We are going to be able to show how important it is to do the retrofits for multifamily housing," Evans said. "Energy scorecards are going to show exactly what those benefits are."

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- » **Affordable Housing Summit (US Green Building Council)**
November 16-17, 2010 | Chicago, IL
<http://bit.ly/airQOY>
- » **Greenbuild International Conference and Expo (US Green Building Council)**
November 17-19, 2010 | Chicago IL
<http://bit.ly/hCrOX>
- » **Cities Alive: 8th Annual Green Roof and Wall Conference**
November 30-December 3, 2010 | Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
<http://www.greenroofs.org/>
- » **National League of Cities Congress of Cities and Exposition**
Nov. 30, 2010-Dec. 4, 2010 | Denver, CO
<http://bit.ly/bKhcj>

Housing Managers Track Energy and Water Usage with Portfolio Manager

PHA staff and HUD-assisted housing managers can now track energy and water usage for individual buildings and an entire development through one easy Web site. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) have developed Portfolio Manager, a free online tool, equipped with a variety of user-friendly options:

Manage Energy and Water Consumption for One or Multiple Buildings.

Track and assess energy and water use, customize meter names and related information, benchmark facilities relative to their past performance, view percent improvements, and share building data with others.

Rate a Building's Energy Performance.

Compare your buildings against others, based on statistical data from a national survey conducted by DOE. Your buildings are contrasted with those with similar structural and operating characteristics, while accounting for key weather variations. Find out whether your buildings qualify for the Energy Star label!

Estimate Your Carbon Footprint.

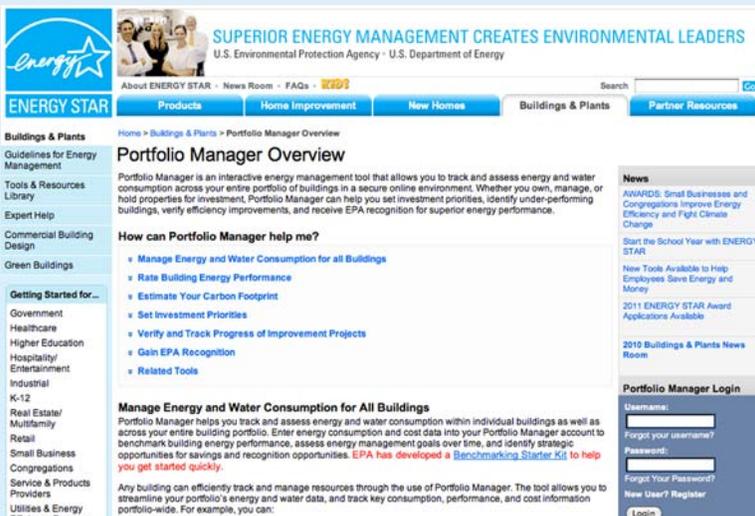
Calculate your greenhouse gas emissions from onsite fuel combustion, purchased electricity, as well as from district heating and cooling.

Set Investment Priorities and Track Improvement Projects.

Estimate cost savings for a particular project or across buildings, allowing you to easily make decisions regarding best practice management. After investments have been made, you can determine cumulative savings from building upgrades.

Gain EPA Recognition.

Share your data with EPA and earn recognition for energy performance. Reveal your best practices and success stories to become a leader for energy improvement or performance!



Start using Portfolio Manager now: <http://bit.ly/cM9ZMo>

Resident's Corner

If you pay your own utilities, there is a free online service that can help you reduce your home energy usage and get paid for it. Earth Aid (www.earthaid.net) is a free service which automatically tracks your home energy use and rewards you based on the reductions you make. To sign up, you will also need to sign up online with your utility provider or providers so that the Web sites can share energy usage and savings data. The Earth Aid site allows you to compare your usage to other homes that are similar in terms of size and style so you have a better idea of how much you can cut back. Even better, Earth Aid enables you to compare your usage with friends and family members – so you can compete in a race for savings! Just send them an invitation to join through the site, and let the fun begin.



Graphic: Earth Aid

Earth Aid makes it easy to save with a range of rewards, including coupons and discounts for national and local hardware stores, supermarkets, coffee shops, restaurants, clothing boutiques, yoga studios, and gift stores. Sign up now and also immediately receive customized green living tips – like installing a programmable thermostat, replacing old night lights with LED models, or using dryer balls to increase the lifespan of your dryer.

Earth Aid not only provides you with detailed suggestions about how to reduce your impact on the environment and increase long-term savings, it tells you exactly how much each suggestion would cost upfront and how much work is involved. If that is not enough, Earth Aid also provides information regarding incentives (such as tax credits or rebates on high efficiency appliances) specific to your geographic area.

Making your home more energy efficient not only reduces your energy bills, but decreases your energy consumption. This limits harmful emissions which contribute to global warming. Earth Aid is a win-win for you and the environment. Going “green” has never been so easy!

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