Better Buildings & Better Plants Initiative

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

What is the Better Buildings & Better Plants Initiative and why is it important?

The Better Buildings & Better Plants Initiative is a voluntary market engagement program for industry to partner with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to reduce energy use across the nation's commercial buildings, industrial plants, and homes. Improving energy performance is an immediate strategy to reduce demand on our electric grid, help American businesses lower operational costs, improve industrial productivity, and free up resources to invest in innovation and growth.

View the Better Buildings & Better Plants Progress Reports to read about partner solutions and program accomplishments.

View the Better Buildings & Better Plants Initiative Overview for more information on the engagement opportunities available within the Initiative.

What kind of organization can join?

The Better Buildings & Better Plants Initiative involves a network of partners and allies that demonstrate national leadership in sound energy management practices:

- Partners are commercial businesses, industrial organizations, data centers, universities, states, municipalities, school districts, and other building owners. Multifamily residential partners are multifamily housing owners and managers.
- Financial institutions, design and construction firms, nonprofits, nongovernmental organizations, and trade associations representing or supporting sectors covered by the Initiative can join the Better Buildings & Better Plants Initiative as allies.

What is the Better Buildings Challenge and how does it fit within the Better Buildings & Better Plants Initiative?

The Better Buildings Challenge invites CEOs and executives of leading U.S. companies, universities, school districts, multifamily organizations, and state and local governments to commit to reduce energy use throughout their U.S. portfolios. Partners in the Better Buildings Challenge commit to:

- Publicly pledge to improve energy intensity of their entire U.S. portfolios by at least 20% within 10 years.
- Publish two solutions demonstrating successful projects or practices the organization has implemented to make progress towards its energy reduction goal.
- Participate in Better Buildings & Better Plants Initiative offerings such as webinars, working groups, and the annual Summit.
- Make available portfolio-wide, building-level energy performance information within 12 months and annually thereafter.
- Provide updates on energy savings performance and progress across the organization.
- Share strategies for reducing organization's energy use.

What is the Better Plants Challenge and how does it fit within the Better Buildings & Better Plants Initiative?

The Better Plants Challenge invites CEOs and executives of leading industrial sector companies to commit to reduce energy

intensity across their U.S. portfolios. These manufacturers are recognized by DOE for their willingness to share solutions with the marketplace and help other industrial organizations benefit from their efforts. Partners commit to:

- Publicly pledge to improve energy intensity of their entire U.S. portfolios by at least 25% within 10 years.
- Publish two solutions demonstrating successful projects or practices the organization has implemented to make progress towards its energy goal.
- Participate in Better Plants Challenge program offerings such In-Plant Trainings, Energy Treasure Hunts, and Virtual Trainings to help meet its energy reduction goal.
- Make available portfolio-wide, building-level energy performance information within 12 months and annually thereafter.
- Provide updates on energy savings performance and progress across the organization.
- Share strategies for reducing organization's energy use.

How does an organization become a partner in the Better Buildings Challenge or Better Plants Challenge?

Commercial, public, multifamily and industrial organizations sign a Partnership Agreement with DOE. If your organization is interested in joining, please complete a Partnership Agreement, available on the Better Buildings & Better Plants Solution Center.

What does DOE offer Better Buildings Challenge & Better Plants Challenge partners?

Partners that commit to a portfolio-wide energy reduction goal through the Better Buildings Challenge or the Better Plants Challenge receive support from DOE to work toward their goal, including access to the following benefits:

- Access to expert-led technical teams.
- Peer-to-peer collaboration within and across market sectors.
- Eligibility to apply for annual awards and share solutions that spotlight achievements.
- National recognition for goal achievement.
- Objective technical expertise and advanced planning tools from DOE's National Laboratories.
- Invitations to topical working groups to exchange insights, strategies, and action plans.
- Check-in calls with DOE to discuss strategies, major initiatives or projects, and interim targets that support the overall commitment.

What if my organization prefers not to set a qualifying energy reduction goal? Can we still be a part of the Initiative?

Yes, if an organization with a portfolio of buildings or plants prefers not to set a qualifying portfolio-wide energy reduction goal, it can still join the Better Buildings & Better Plants Initiative to connect with peers and allies across sectors. Initiative partners receive the following benefits:

- Peer-to-peer collaboration within and across market sectors.
- Eligibility to apply for annual awards and share solutions that spotlight achievements.
- Occasional invitations to speaking events such as Better Buildings & Better Plants Webinars and the annual Better Buildings & Better Plants Summit.
- Option to join the Water Savings Network and/or the Waste Reduction Network.

What are Better Buildings & Better Plants Initiative Accelerators?

Better Buildings & Better Plants Initiative Accelerators are designed to demonstrate specific innovative policies and approaches that will accelerate investment in energy saving technologies and practices upon successful demonstration. Each Accelerator is a targeted, short-term, partner-focused activity designed to address specific persistent barriers to greater energy management.

More than 20 Accelerators have been completed, covering topics such as Building Energy Data Analysis, Outdoor Lighting, Smart Labs, and Packaged Combined Heat and Power, among others. Visit the Accelerators on the Better Buildings & Better Plants Solution Center to explore currently active Accelerators and access resources and information.

What are Better Buildings & Better Plants allies?

Financial institutions, design and construction firms, nonprofits, nongovernmental organizations, and trade associations representing sectors covered by the Initiative can join the Better Buildings & Better Plants Initiative as allies. Through this collaboration, allies help develop high-impact technical and market solutions that improve energy performance.

What are the commitments for Financial Allies?

Better Buildings & Better Plants Initiative Financial Allies provide innovative financial products to help partners and other organizations fund energy savings projects, demonstrate transparency in their approaches for others to follow, and promote financing opportunities for energy projects.

Financial Allies commit to invest or lend at least $25 million for facility energy savings projects within 12 months. They also agree to assign a senior-level liaison who is committed to allocating the necessary resources to pursue all potential projects resulting from the Better Buildings & Better Plants Initiative. Financial Allies also commit to providing information on financial products, sharing financial performance and information, and publicly promoting energy savings financing opportunities.

What types of information are Financial Allies asked to share?

Financial Allies are asked to share information about their projects annually in order to showcase their progress and drive more market participants to improve energy performance. This includes what energy savings measures were implemented, how much the project cost, where the capital came from, how agreements were structured to maximize benefit to each of the stakeholders, and how the projects have performed, both in energy and financial terms.

Financial Allies are also asked to provide information on new program developments

or innovative financing services in the form of solutions that may serve as a resource for Better Buildings & Better Plants Initiative partners looking for financing solutions.

What are the requirements regarding data reporting and transparency?

The Better Buildings & Better Plants Initiative works with sector leaders to develop unique and applicable data tracking reporting methods for energy and water use and waste generation. All Better Buildings Challenge and Better Plants Challenge partners commit to report portfolio-wide, facility level energy performance information annually. More specifically:

- Better Buildings Challenge partners provide square feet of floor space, site energy use, source energy use, weather-normalized energy intensity, and energy intensity adjusted for space attributes/operating characteristics (where available). A portfolio may be defined as the set of buildings or sub-building spaces for which an organization manages, pays bills, and/or can report energy consumption. Note that for multifamily properties, partners are encouraged to obtain and rely on whole-building data.
- Better Plants Challenge partners provide corporate-wide data on energy consumption and savings on an annual basis. Anonymized facility-level data will also be collected from manufacturers, but energy data will be aggregated and normalized before publication to protect confidential information. No energy performance data is published without partner approval.

How do partners track water savings?

Through the Water Savings Network, DOE brings organizations together to discuss and demonstrate successful approaches to reducing water use in buildings and plants. DOE works with partners to set water savings goals, track progress, and showcase solutions. Partners sharing water data will establish a goal across their portfolios and share baseline data and performance data on an annual basis. To join, existing Better Buildings & Better Plants partners can email their program contact(s), indicating their intention to participate in the Water Savings Network. Other organizations can email betterbuildings@doe.gov or betterplants@doe.gov to learn about the Water Savings Network. View the Water Savings Network Fact Sheet for more information.

How do partners track waste reduction?

To facilitate waste reduction, the Waste Reduction Network brings industry-leading organizations together to demonstrate successful approaches to waste management. Organizations with a portfolio of buildings or plants they own or manage can join by committing to a waste goal and/or at least one activity annually set in coordination with DOE. To join, existing Better Buildings & Better Plants partners can email their program contact(s), indicating their intention to participate in the Waste Reduction Network. Other organizations can email betterbuildings@doe.gov or betterplants@doe.gov to learn about the Waste Reduction Network. View the Waste Reduction Network Fact Sheet for more information.

How does the Department of Energy work to amplify partner solutions?

Showcase Projects, Implementation Models, and other solutions are featured on the Better Buildings & Better Plants Solution Center. The Solution Center houses more than 3,400 solutions and resources and is designed to help organizations easily find solutions by topic, building type, solution type, building size, sector, technology, location, and more.

Partner solutions may be further amplified on the Better Buildings & Better Plants Beat Blog, in program newsletters, on social media, and more. Partners are encouraged to participate in program webinars to showcase their leadership.

In addition, the annual Better Buildings & Better Plants Summit is a national conference where leading organizations across sectors showcase solutions and innovative strategies. The Summit convenes hundreds of partner representatives and stakeholders to exchange best practices and highlight demonstrated market solutions with an equal emphasis on discussing future opportunities for greater energy savings in America's buildings and plants.