Multifamily BBC:
Tips from the Field, Using Third-Party Software
for Successful Utility Benchmarking
February 16, 2017

Janine Cuneo: (In progress) – today, a webinar called "Multifamily BBC: Tips from the Field, Using Third-Party Software for Successful Utility Benchmarking."

We're going to have two speakers on today, Kathleen Berube, a Sustainability Associate from NHT, National Housing Trust; and Brian Bieler, Director of Asset Management from REACH CDC.

We've asked them to speak today on helping all of us understand how do you meet those utility benchmarking requirements that each BBC partner has in using a third-party software or vendor. There's many different ways one can meet utility benchmarking goals. Many organizations go on their own and are able to walk through the process of contacting utility companies, looking at their portfolio square footage, entering data into Portfolio Manager, and working with the BBC account managers and data team to help them understand how to do all that process.

Other entities might work with local consultants that are knowledgeable about this industry, and even others – like we're going to be hearing today – are working with national entities on how to be successful at meeting this goal.

This is a reminder for folks out there. As a BBC partner you're committing to conducting an energy efficiency assessment of your building portfolio and pledge a portfolio-wide energy savings goal of at least 20 percent within 10 years.

And also, as many of you know out there, BBC partners we're in what's called our year of data, where we're making a concerted push to really encourage – if not encourage, but require – all of our partners to meet this commitment goal of conducting this energy efficiency assessment of your building portfolio. You probably either received calls or emails from account managers and from data team members, from my company, ICF, trying to help you with meeting those goals and helping you understand Portfolio Manager, how to talk to your utility companies, etc. And we're going to continue to be available to you guys through this year of data and probably beyond to help you meet those goals.

Before we jump into the webinar – we'll also have folks at the end of the call available from WegoWise and BrightPower, Paula Seville and Caleb Smeeth. They will be helping us answer any questions if you guys have specific questions around how to connect with and use the specific third-party software representatives.

Before we jump into the presentation, though, I do want to pass off to my colleague, Chantel Key. She's going to help us out with a little bit of webinar logistics for all of us. Chantel?

Chantel Key: All right. Thanks, Janine.

So if you have any content-related questions today I ask that you submit them through the Q&A chat box and please submit them to all panelists. If you have any questions related to the technology or have any audio or video issues, we also ask that you submit those through the chat box and send them directly to me, to your host, and I can chat with you to solve those issues. Janine?

Janine Cuneo: Thanks, Chantel. And we'll be taking Q&As throughout the webinar, but we'll be holding off on answering them until the end and we'll hopefully be able to answer any questions you guys might have and/or point you to any resources out there as well.

Let me go ahead and pass off now to NHT and they can tell us a little about their experience in meeting utility benchmarking requirements and working specifically with their third-party software vendor, WegoWise. Kathleen?

Kathleen Berube: Thank you. Hi, everyone. Again, my name is Kathleen Berube and I'm the sustainability associate at the National Housing Trust, and we use WegoWise to benchmark our entire portfolio. I'm going to talk to you about the different features that are in WegoWise and how specifically we use WegoWise to meet the Better Buildings Challenge.

So just a little bit about the National Housing Trust before I get started. We are the owner and asset manager of Multifamily Affordable Housing. We're based in DC and we own properties up and down the East Coast primarily. We joined the Better Buildings Challenge in 2010 and we've been working with WegoWise specifically since 2013.

Just a brief overview of how WegoWise works in conjunction with Portfolio Manager in particular. We do the majority of our data uploading and analysis within WegoWise itself, and then WegoWise actually pushes the data out to Portfolio Manager. It's a really nice way to visualize your data before actually getting to the Portfolio Manager stage.

So in sequential order of how we use WegoWise, we first track our usage among all of our portfolio's energy consumption and water consumption. Then from there we can prioritize where we're going to be spending our money in terms of energy and water upgrades so we can really make sure that we're getting the biggest bank for our buck in terms of spending.

And then of course we want to make sure that our spending is actually paying off and we're getting the returns on investment that we anticipate with a lot of our energy and water upgrades, so WegoWise has a lot of nice features to actually measure and verify that you're actually reducing your consumption.

And then finally, you can use WegoWise software to create reports that actually show how successful you've been or highlight the areas or the properties that you may need to focus on in the future.

So I'm going to go through each of these four primary areas that I just outlined. We'll start with tracking our usage. This is the screen when you log into WegoWise. Each property that's in the

software has its own page. This page is for our R Street apartments. You can see that on the left-hand side we have all of our different common area meter and water meters. We actually have a solar meter as well on this property.

I want to draw attention to the top meter where it says "apartment 000, electric." This is actually our tenant account. We've been fortunate enough to have some of our properties located within DC, and Pepco offers an aggregate tenant usage amount for electricity through a third-party software called Resource Advisor. So we've actually been able to get tenant data for this property as well.

So then you can see that there's a graph showing you all the different energy consumption over time. You can actually get this information in both graph and table format. You can toggle back and forth, if you can see on the top. And you can also download this information, too. We use that feature a lot.

There'll be a lot of times where somebody will ask me about the specific electricity consumption for 2016 for the tenant. I can quickly download this information and manipulate it in any way that I want.

Another feature I want to quickly point out is where it says "total energy" at the top and then "BTU per square foot." You can change that to say whatever you want. You can do kW per square foot; you can do kW hours per bedroom; or you can just do straight kW hour usage. It's a really helpful way to visualize the data in any way that you want to.

So then when you actually click within a specific meter – this is for one of the electricity meters – you'll see the start and end date for each of the billing periods and then the usage in kW hours. Then you have listed out the total charge and the supply charge and the delivery charge. You can download a copy of the bill, which is really helpful if you need that for any particular reason.

And WegoWise has this feature where you can actually sync your different accounts within WegoWise with the utility itself, meaning that you don't have to manually input anything. It will sync right to the website and pull the bill information down for you. It's really convenient and definitely saves a lot of time in terms of energy benchmarking.

After we have a benchmark of how our buildings are performing, we can then decide where we're going to be spending our money to get the most energy and water efficiency upgrades that we're looking for. So when you log into WegoWise you'll see a dashboard that looks similar to this, and you can see all of our properties listed on the right-hand side.

Then there's actually a graph – I have this set to look specifically at water. This is showing you which of your buildings is performing the most efficiently and the least efficiently. So if we had some money to do a water conservation upgrade, we would focus on the properties that are in the top right-hand quadrant, where it says "worst buildings" because we know those are the ones that are performing the least efficiently. Again, this is all downloadable and it's compatible with Excel.

So the previous slide was benchmarking within your portfolio itself, and you can also WegoWise to benchmark outside of your portfolio, meaning that you can compare your buildings' performance to all buildings within WegoWise.

This is a screen grab from one of our properties, and you can see in terms of water the building is performing really efficiently using 58 percent less than the median building; but in terms of electricity it's actually using more than the median building. From here we can understand that in order to meet the Better Buildings Challenge we will need to focus on electric efficiency at this property in particular.

Another unique feature is that you can also look at your spending at the bottom at the left, where it says "cost." The software breaks out your spending between water, electricity, and gas, so you can see where your money's going.

Moving on to measurement and verification. This is something that we do quite a lot of, because if we're investing in upgrades to reduce our energy and water consumption we want to know that our investments are paying off and we're getting the returns that we expected and the energy reductions that we expected.

This is a screen grab from our Briarcliff property out in Vienna, Virginia. We did some LED retrofitting builds on exterior lighting and common area lighting. You can see the amount of money that we spent; the anticipated savings was around 11 percent. We actually saved quite a bit more than we were anticipating. This is one of our more successful upgrades. Based on the savings that we've been able to see here we know that this is a really effective way of meeting the Better Buildings Challenge that we can use as a model for our other properties.

Some of the features I want to point out quickly is that you can change from kW hours to BTUs; you can do kW hours per square foot; you can choose not normalized at all or kW hours per bedroom, whatever you're looking for in terms of unit you can customize. You can also download the graph into Excel, so if you wanted to pull it out for another report you can do that.

Another way that you can visualize your savings with WegoWise is through a custom report. These reports are super-customizable. You can choose electricity, gas, water, whatever you're interested in tracking, and it will compare the utility that you selected over a timeframe that you selected.

This one in particular is looking at electricity use per square foot from 2015 to 2016. We had set the goal of 11 percent in terms of reduction. You can see that we achieved a 40 percent reduction, which is a lot more than we were anticipating, which is awesome. You can also download this in a table, just like with a lot of the other features, and you can also toggle between graphs and tables if you're interested in raw numbers versus visualization.

The last area that I wanted to discuss is reporting. We're doing a lot with reporting right now. We're in the middle of creating a Better Buildings Challenge report, which is basically the state of our portfolio. We're looking at comparing our energy use from 2014 to 2016. We've been

doing a lot of resident utility sampling using the Better Buildings Challenge sampling guidelines and then uploading that into WegoWise.

We've been using this premium report feature to track the changes in electricity and gas and water consumption for each property. This particular report is from Channel Square, and we've been doing a lot of upgrades at Channel Square, so it's good to see that we have a 25 percent reduction in total energy use from 2014 to 2016.

So one feature that I wanted to point out on this is that you can actually weather-normalize in this report, which is pretty unique. We tried to weather-normalize on our own and were not successful. You can actually just toggle that on and off.

What that does is it uses 2014's weather for all of the data that you input into this report, so you're sort of taking out the really hot days and the really cold days and comparing apples to apples in terms of consumption. Again, you can get this in a graph or a table, and you can also download it, so that's what we've been doing to report on our Better Buildings Challenge progress.

The last thing I wanted to discuss was our time and staff commitment to benchmarking. One of the biggest things that I wanted to emphasize was that the quality of your results. It's really important to input quality results, is what I want to say. You actually have to spend some time and effort really getting to know your data and your utility company. We actually have an intern who spends 15 hours a week doing resident utility sampling.

So we have a pretty big commitment to benchmarking at NHT, but there's definitely a lot of features within WegoWise that make it easier. The automatic uploads are definitely one of them. So it's an evolving process. Our benchmarking is by no means perfect, but we've definitely made a lot of strides in the recent past to up the quality of our data and start really understanding what's going on at our portfolio.

So that is all I have in terms of WegoWise, and I'll be happy to answer any questions that anyone has at the end of the webinar. So thank you, and it was a pleasure to be able to speak to you today.

Janine Cuneo: Thank you so much, Kathleen. That was really informative; especially helpful to understand the level of staffing commitment you guys are placing on this as well.

Why don't we go ahead and switch over to REACH CDC and Brian? He'll go ahead and talk to us about his experiences. He works specifically with BrightPower, again, one of the other third-party software providers out there they can tap into if they're needing some additional support. Brian?

Brian Bieler: (Inaudible) – Portland, Oregon/Vancouver, Washington area and outlying counties here in the Northwest of about 2,200 units.

We took an interest in utility performance as a way to try to control cost originally when we started taking a look at this back in 2008. As part of that effort to get ahold of utility expenses we partnered with BrightPower on a series of energy audits to identify outliers in the REACH portfolio.

Right around a similar time as we were fully engaged, the Better Buildings Challenge opportunity came along and it was one that was already in sync with our mission and goals that we had set for ourselves as an organization, so it was a good alignment. To have a partner that could help you meet those goals on the federal side was fantastic. We engaged in energy scorecards from BrightPower shortly after beginning this benchmarking process as a way to better get ahold of the activity in the building.

One of the nice features about partnering with another organization is they're able to help us facilitate the process of getting our building data into Portfolio Manager with the necessary owner and resident utility data to meet the program requirements for the Better Buildings Challenge; and they do a lot on their end to help us collect that data together; verify the usage and utility data; perform data checks in Portfolio Manager, just making sure all of the – accuracy for reporting and assisting with that piece of it; and then also as well providing a high-level summary of trends in the portfolio to help us as we go along identify the buildings where there's the most opportunity to make a difference, much like the other system that was described.

The vast amount of utility information that we're gathering, that data is scraped directly from the utility provider's system with building and cost information and then into our system. So the one other nice feature of this is at the time that we were going around gathering the owner data, we had already gathering release information from tenants even before it was part of the Better Buildings Challenge by incorporating that utility release information into the annual leasing paperwork that they were required to complete; meaning we constantly have permission to gather running 12-month data for all of the tenants.

And because the accounts look very much like an owner account, we were able to partner with BrightPower to directly get the tenant data with the tenant's permission, and that uploads into the system as well. And for us that's a strength over the aggregating of information because you're able to pinpoint within units where utility efficiency is not happening.

The importance of that partnership, one example – the first signature project that we did for the Better Buildings Challenge was work on a building we have, West Shore in downtown Portland. As part of the scope in what we were looking to do, we had identified that there was a pocket of about 20 percent of our residents were paying 30 to 60 percent more every month for their utilities than the rest of the building.

We were able to identify that trend in location through having the individual data, so we incorporated work to help out those units as part of our overall project. They were all located directly over a garage parking structure that had inadequate insulation between the garage and those buildings because we were able to partner and see that individual data. We were able to correct and normalize for those residents who were paying, again, 30 to 60 percent more for their utility bills every month.

In terms of what all that means is making a commitment within the organization as was described before; bringing in an additional intern the second quarter to further assist our efforts to really look at that individual tenant data and keep that connection of data collection going strongly; all great things. So it's nice to be able to partner with an organization as you're trying to take on these challenges.

This is an example, a summary of opportunities. There's a couple ways to look at slices of data. Within this particular energy scorecard tool they have letter gradings and can identify savings opportunities by building. This one's a nice little graph of something that we showed a committee recently as well which they loved, because it helped conceptualize your entire portfolio and where those energy dollars are being spent and some savings opportunities.

As you dive into this a little bit deeper on the data side, you're able to put together with energy scorecards a prioritization report. So we'd get there the number of units, how much we're spending, where those are deviating from what we would expect to see and identify savings opportunities within the portfolio.

As we mentioned previously – and I'm sure all organizations are looking to tackle this – there's quite a bit that you can get into the more data you have and the more you want to drill down, but recognizing that there's other activity going on within the organization. It's really important for us that we're able to grab and handle the outliers when we can and put priority where there's going to be the most savings and the most energy efficiency improvements within the portfolio.

We're also able to identify portfolio trends by energy use by end use and go through and drill down and try to figure out exactly which elements in your portfolio are trending in the wrong direction and have an idea what you can do, more focus to address those needs. And again, you can break them down and identify quickly where you're seeing the savings happening and then where there's increases that warrant getting some attention and then you are able to more quickly address those.

Another example – again, it was great having all the data in there and the reporting functionality of having a partner and being able to pull out and tease out where there's opportunities. This is an example of an older report that we've pulled shortly after 2013 to try to identify where are those fastest risers; specifically here, where heating in the building has increased dramatically.

Again, just having the staff time and the discipline to address that internally, we can meet with our team to look at the energy scorecard status and opportunities monthly and try to identify outliers and put together game plans and address those. Often it involves more of a long-term strategy of finding funding and identifying opportunities to implement something in the project that's going to make a real difference.

For those of you involved in the water challenge as well, you know that – completely another piece that's tough to tackle outside of the energy side, but it's one that at least in our region, where the cost of sewer and water is going up faster than the other utilities, it's one that's very important for us to take a look at.

Also another feature of that is we have a lot of master-metered water usage, meaning it's very difficult for us to tell individually what resident water usage is occurring. It often means trying to solve problems by looking at aggregated water usage data.

This report here helps us establish what we would expect to see as a baseline, and then again able on the right side of that graph, to find the outliers in that portfolio and specifically work with those site teams to try to address what that issue is, whether it's onsite irrigation or potentially a leak within a unit. These are all things we really try to keep an eye on, and these reports help us quickly identify where water usage has spiked rapidly.

In terms of demonstrating savings, again, this one is on the water side and a little bit of an interesting story about why it's important to pay attention to details within the building in terms of usage. We were able to see this building, the Admiral apartments, a senior building, HUD, downtown Portland for us. We had, looking at the individual water billing cycle, noticed a huge spike that occurred representing almost double the historical water usage at the building.

We spent a lot of time trying to track down leaks and implement some other measures to try to control that water usage, but we were unable to make a dent in it with any facility-sized efforts. So by meeting with the team and trying to discuss what's going on and then going to the site and meeting with them, doing the detective work, we were able to figure out that we had one resident in that building who, for a coping mechanism, was running water basically 24/7 while they were in the unit.

Identifying that, we were able to work with our resident services, purchase a $100 noise simulation machine, and quickly were able to reduce the water usage back to normal. You can see on the savings to-date that's a considerable amount of money that was being spent just because of resident behavior in one unit.

So if there's lessons or pullouts to be taken away here, it's the right thing to do to try to gather as much tenant information as you can specifically not just to assist the tenant with helping to control the expenses on their side, but also help us as an owner identify trends or issues that are creating more widespread usage of utility in a particular building or by a particular tenant.

This really gives us an opportunity with the whole building data to try to get at some of the activity that as an industry at least early on in our efforts to deal with this – rising utility cost – how important it is the activity that's happening on the resident side in our buildings, where for the most part it's the most space that's being occupied, by residents, and that's where the core usage is.

So this allows us to only meet our goals of trying to reduce energy usage in the portfolio from a social standpoint or from an owner expense standpoint, but also making an impact for residents and opening us up to opportunities to help capture more rent through demonstrated savings in terms of trying to set utility allowances in our projects.

And having that unit verification, which BrightPower's been able to help us bring to the table, we can really see where there's strong deviations from what you'd expect to see in your utility allowance and giving you a tool to try to negotiate more favorable utility allowances when you're making that investment in the savings of energy and water in the building and that's resulting in lower utility bills.

And that is the meat of the presentation, although I'd like to add again having a partner help get through this data is extremely beneficial to REACH. It's great the groups are listening.

Having that opportunity to go out there and implement improvements through strong, verified data but not have to be out there alone committing too much organizational resource to a project when you can have a partner that helps bring experience and not just gathering that data but helping you talk through what your best options are in terms of making the most efficient improvement and really maximizing dollar investment into retrofits and upgrades at your projects.

Janine Cuneo: Great. Thank you so much, Brian. That was really fascinating, especially hearing some of that anecdotal information, of that one tenant who had some coping mechanism that one wouldn't call energy efficient. That was very interesting to hear about.

Before we go into Q&A, please everyone feel free to ask questions in their box. On the right-hand side of the webinar you'll see a little box. Click Q&A and you can type those in and we'll be taking those on.

Wanted to point out that on the HUD Exchange there's going to be a revamped BBC site, and it's going to have a news and announcements sections. It's going to give you direct links to the multifamily sector pages on the DOE BB website, and on there you'll be able to look at case studies that include both implementation models on how best to do utility benchmarking and other energy efficiency work that the partners do.

You'll also be able to see data displays, partner profiles; and then there's also a little section on HUD Exchange that will be around the incentives of the BBC program, inclusive of some financial resources. That will be going live tomorrow, so make sure you check out that new revamped site.

And in the future I think we're looking to probably a month out, there's going to be a comprehensive utility benchmarking guide. We internally are calling it a little bit of a how-to – how to do utility benchmarking from A through Z. So please make sure you keep your eyes out for that.

All of you guys should be on the new listserv that comes out through HUD Exchange on the BBC program. If you are not, feel free to go ahead and contact myself. My name again is Janine Cuneo. My email address is there and we'll make sure we get you signed up.

And then we also have contact information on both the presenters today as well as the third-party software representatives that were part of the two entities, WegoWise and BrightPower, that are partners from NHT and REACH.

We'll go ahead and dig into some of the questions now. I believe this is to NHT, but both NHT or REACH, if you guys want to pontificate on this, that would be great. "Can you speak more about how you were able to get tenant data with Resource Advisor?"

Kathleen Berube: This is Kathleen. I can definitely answer that question.

So Research Advisor requires you to submit a list of meter numbers from the property. That can be as easy as going out there yourself or having maybe the property manager write down all the meter numbers for you, and then you basically submit that to Pepco. There's an email address specifically that you submit – I can get that email address out to anybody that would like it – but then you can log into Resource Advisor every month.

The software actually takes all the meters and combines it into one aggregate number for you. That pushes into WegoWise so we can have the tenant-level information. A lot of utility companies actually don't offer this kind of information, so that's why we've been doing a lot of the resident permission – submitting the permissions to the utility companies to get some sort of indication of how much they're using.

Janine Cuneo: Thank you, Kathleen. That's great.

We have another question to both NHT and REACH. "How do your organizations coordinate internally to utilize reports and data in your energy monitoring tools? Also, who takes the lead to look for spikes and overall performance of the properties?"

Brian, why don't we have you go first this time?

Brian Bieler: Yeah. Great. So again, we have an internal team made up of facilities portfolio managers for the property management side and our asset management staff, and we review data with them, spikes within, the information of what we would like to address or some general strategies for the portfolio.

We also do a monthly call with the asset management team at BrightPower things that we're seeing in there; additional report functionality we might want to make or just talk about; again, our general strategies for trying to meet our energy and water reduction commitments.

In terms of knowing when those spikes happen within the actual energy scorecard tool, there is a series of alerts that are issued that you can drill down into and that are issued every month based on what the system is seeing in terms of increased usage against what you would expect to see, so that's kind of one first-layer way that you could get alerted.

They also have the option for the customer to receive email notices when those things happen, which makes it even easier to respond to spikes in usage.

Janine Cuneo: Great. And Kathleen, from NHT's perspective, how do you coordinate internally to utilize these reports, and who takes the lead to look at the spikes in overall performance?

Kathleen Berube: Sure. We have a sustainability team in NHT, which is just two of us, so it's really I take the lead on actually getting into our data. WegoWise actually comes out with monthly spike reports for us, so any time that usage goes above or below a certain percentage of what we would expect of a property we get an alert.

So then I take those spike reports and pass them on to the property managers to try to figure out what happened during that particular month. So in terms of responsibility I would say that I like to be personally really hands-on with our data and go through and consistently look at how our buildings are performing and if anything looks out of place.

But then if anybody has a specific question for me on how an upgrade is performing or how a building's performing, I take the lead on creating any sort of reports necessary and then sending that out to the organization.

Janine Cuneo: Great. Thank you. Another question we have for both of you is if you guys could comment on the level of effort required to set up your respective portfolios, specifically to the hours you had to invest, the number of people involved, and how you may have used and/or worked with your third-party software representatives.

Kathleen, why don't we go with you first on that one?

Kathleen Berube: Okay. Sure. So I did not work at the National Housing Trust yet when the majority of it was set up, but in terms of information that you need to provide, you have to have the building square footage and the number of meters and all that kind of account information.

So I would say that that's probably the most time-consuming part of it, is getting everything up and running. I think Kate is on the line, our account manager. I don't know if she'd be able to speak more in terms of actual man-hours, how long that took.

Paula Seville: Hi. This is Paula from WegoWise. I can't speak to any account specifically, but Kathleen was on the right track there.

For setting up an account it's really gathering the basic building information – square footage, unit types, unit counts, bedroom counts, those types of information. And then collecting the utility information is really the key. I think it depends organization to organization how you have that information stored and how easily – you know, some organizations have it kind of all at the accounting level, so setup can go more smoothly that way. So I think it depends from one to the next.

Janine Cuneo: Okay. Great. And Brian, were you around and/or involved when REACH's portfolios got set up, and would you be able to speak to the hours invested and the numbers of people involved?

Brian Bieler: Yeah. Originally I was a part of this, and at that time it was an asset management department of one for the bulk of this work; fell on me.

Fortunately pretty much everything required to get up and going into this system is information that should either be easily available or through the process of completing that information you'll feel really good because now you have it all in one place. So definitely worth the effort.

We used some volunteers' project time on the front end, including – fortunately for us it was a slow time in construction and we had a very favorable general contractor partner that does a lot of work with us, so we were able to get free time from one of their project staff to go through and do low-level energy audits of all of our buildings, which basically meant gathering all the meter information and verifying the assumptions that we're making about how energy was working in that building.

I'd say it can take a considerable amount of time, but again for us it was a matter of getting it into a spreadsheet the information we already have and then uploading it. It was like going field to field and having to enter all this information for every building. It was just gathering it all in one place.

And again in general, tackling this, it's great to go with third-party support, and internally in terms of having the opportunity to make it happen and bandwidth, the two points where you'll really want some outside assistance hopefully in terms of interns that are interested in the energy field is that initial setup; and then when you're going to make that second commitment to really trying to capture all that tenant utility data, that's another discrete project that you might want to set up as a discrete project and bring in some outside assistance. It's just normal workflow after that.

Janine Cuneo: Thank you. Great. Let me move my question to Paula and Caleb from WegoWise and BrightPower, respectively.

From your guys' experience, working with several organizations out there, what would you say one or two of the main barriers to successful utility benchmarking that you hear about with multifamily owners and managers that you may contract with or you may not? What are you hearing out there are the main barriers to successful utility benchmarking in the multifamily sector?

Paula, why don't we go with you first?

Paula Seville: Yeah. So I think both Kathleen and Brian spoke to this well, but having the internal commitment time and resources I think definitely is a barrier. A lot of folks find when you start benchmarking it can be overwhelming because now you have all this data that you didn't have before and there's a lot to take action on.

So I think translating benchmarking into action is something that can be a tougher transition. You feel like almost you have more on your plate than you had before benchmarking. But I think

once – we see that our customers once they get in the groove of things – and again, they both spoke to it well – and you get a good workflow and someone within the organization committed to really utilizing the data, you see really fabulous results, whether you're using a third-party supplier or even just Portfolio Manager.

Janine Cuneo: Mm-hmm. Great. And Caleb, what would say are one or two of those main barriers that you guys see to successful benchmarking for multifamilies?

Caleb Smeeth: Yeah. I would echo what some of the other folks have said around just collecting all of the property and utility information that goes into creating the initial benchmark.

So having someone on the client side that is responsible for collecting that information and getting it fed over to the third-party software to create that initial benchmark is one of the big hurdles, as well as just trying to figure out, with all the different utilities if you're working with a national portfolio – or even a smaller portfolio, for that matter – trying to figure out exactly what is required when you're going after things like whole building data; trying to figure out all the different requirements because each utility has its own unique way of collecting that information.

So having someone that knows how to do all of that data collection and get it into Portfolio Manager for reporting is another hurdle that I've found.

Janine Cuneo: Great. Another question we have for both of you, Paula and Caleb, is, "What is your contracting or costs associated with doing the type of work we've been talking about today? How do you guys set those contracts up and what are some of the costs that may be associated to doing that?"

Caleb, why don't we have you start first?

Caleb Smeeth: Sure. So we on the BrightPower side have someone on our account management team that typically works with the client to get a contract set up, which requires a list of buildings and trying to figure out how many accounts might be associated with each building.

So there's a setup cost that goes into the contract as well as the ongoing subscription because we're engaging with the clients on an ongoing basis, trying to form a strategic relationship with them, so there's that ongoing subscription that is also associated with the energy scorecard as well.

Janine Cuneo: Great. And Paula?

Paula Seville: Yeah. We're set up very similarly. We have an implementation fee to do that help customers with that initial setup hurdle. And then we typically charge a per unit annual subscription fee, which ranges based on the level of service.

Janine Cuneo: Great. And then also, I think specifically, Paula, we were hearing through some partners that some of the partners are needing to reach out – excuse me, that some of the clients

that you have, that they need to actually turn a switch, I always call it – but they need to be able to tell you guys when the information is ready, a BBC data display to go live.

And I'm just wondering if that's true, and if so, how do they do that? And if not, want to make sure we are articulating that that is not true, and what are some of the steps they might need to do if not?

Paula Seville: So I think I'm understanding your question. I guess we're now working, Janine, with your team at ICF, so we have a full list of the BBC partners, and we just set up that automatic export to Portfolio Manager for our customers who are also BBC partners, and then coordinate with David on your team to make sure that the information is shared over.

So I believe I'm answering your question. I'm not sure if there's – I don't think there's another step in the process.

Janine Cuneo: Great. That's helpful. And I think I'm not seeing any more questions coming in. This has been really helpful to understand a couple of specific examples of how people are both using third-party software to be able to really unpack and diagnose where some energy savings can be made.

It's also helpful to understand the resources you guys are committing to that, so really appreciate your time.

Before we sign off, though, I want to pass it over to Julia with HUD for any closing remarks. Julia?

Julia Hustwit: Hi. Thank you, guys. This is Julia from HUD. I lead the multifamily sector for the Better Buildings Challenge, as you guys know, and I just wanted to thank everyone who's on the phone for joining us today, and to our speakers for taking the time out to help educate their peers on this really important work that we're doing; and to congratulate you for the success you're having in benchmarking as well.

One note for everybody is that if you are involved in any of HUD's assisted housing programs as well as the Better Buildings Challenge, you are eligible for a management add-on fee incentive, which can be sometimes a little bit painstaking to get set up in the first place, but that money does give you a little bit of a boost that you can put towards benchmarking, either internally through your own staff time through your own staff time, through a consultant that you hire, or through a third-party software provider as well.

So if anyone hasn't signed up for a management add-on fee incentive yet who is eligible, please reach out to your account manager, and in particular reach out to your HUD field office representative who can help you with that.

And again, just thank you to everybody for joining the call. We'll be posting this webinar, I believe, and the recording on our site.

Janine Cuneo: Yes, that is correct. Usually within five business days at the longest – this webinar will be on the site.

And thank you so much, Julia. Thank you to everyone. And again, if anyone has any information that they'd like to get more knowledge on this program, check out the revamped BBC page on HUD Exchange or contact any of the folks that you heard today, happy to connect on any issues you might have.

Good luck with your benchmarking and look forward to connecting in the future. Thanks so much.

(END)