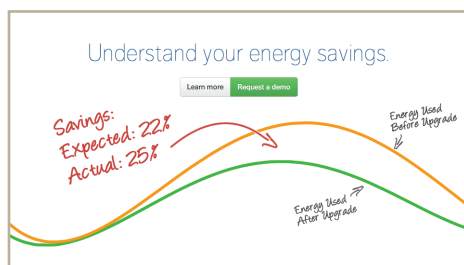
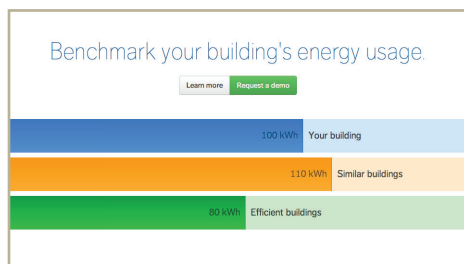
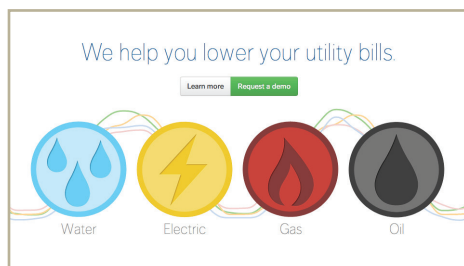


Peabody Hits \$1 Million in Annual Utility Savings

By David Okubo



Utility bills are one of the largest expenses for affordable housing owners and managers, accounting for more than one-third of operating costs. In Massachusetts, a number of utility and loan energy-efficiency programs are geared toward better managing these costs. The first prerequisite for a successful program is data. New techniques are now making data collection easier, less time intensive and more accessible.

Peabody Properties began working with a Boston-based software platform, WegoWise, as part of Mass Save's Low Income Multifamily Retrofit program. WegoWise enabled Peabody to automatically retrieve, track and benchmark utility data across its 100-plus property portfolio, so that it could identify the least efficient buildings that offer the largest return-on-investment (ROI) potential.

With these insights in hand, Peabody implemented \$4.3 million in retrofits. The program covered everything from more efficient windows, roofs and gas systems to heating, lighting and refrigerators. As a result Peabody has achieved annual utility bill savings of more than \$1 million.

Thanks to these savings, Peabody expanded its work with WegoWise to enroll its entire building portfolio in the program. Peabody is now launching a retrofit initiative that targets what can be a "silent drain" on utility bills: water. Using WegoWise's platform to target the leakiest buildings, Peabody plans to retrofit five buildings with projected annual savings of more than \$180,000 in water and gas bills annually. The program can be expanded to 30 additional buildings.

"Utility costs account for 30 percent of our operating expenses, and WegoWise has helped us make a serious dent in that," said Michael Ferguson, Vice President of Facilities Management & Capital Planning for Peabody Properties. "Now that we understand our portfolio's utility usage, we can focus our resources on upgrading worst-performing buildings. The fantastic energy savings we've realized so far working with WegoWise made expanding into water an easy decision."

Efficiency isn't a done deal once retrofits have been installed. Peabody also works with WegoWise on measurement and verification programs (M&V) to ensure that results keep delivering. It has uncovered pleasantly surprising results. For example, in one building Peabody replaced 90 toilets with an expected payback period of five years, only to discover that the payback period was 36 months instead. Peabody is applying lessons learned in these retrofits to new construction and other projects, improving net operating income across its entire portfolio.

David Okubo is an Account Executive for Antenna/A Beckerman Company.