



Saving Energy

The 6-Step Guide to Tenant Action

Prepared by Toronto Environmental Alliance (TEA) with financial support
from the Ontario Ministry of Environment Community Go Green Fund

July 2008



Acknowledgements

First of all, we would like to thank Sean Meagher and Public Interest for playing such a vital role in developing this Guide. We would also like to thank the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) for partnering with TEA and Public Interest in past tenant-led programs. They have helped nurture and test much of the program outlined in this guide.

Many thanks to the participants of the Toronto workshop held on June 11, 2008, who provided essential feedback on the draft Guide. Their comments and suggestions helped to shape the Guide into a more concise, user-friendly resource.

We would also like to thank our project partner, the Low Income Energy Network (LIEN), for promoting this Guide and making sure it reaches tenant leaders and advocates throughout Ontario.

This Guide was made possible through the financial support of the Ontario Ministry of Environment's Community Go Green Fund.

Special thanks to those behind the scenes: the Guide's copyeditor, Cameron Taylor of Nerve Media, and designer Suzanne Rodenkirchen.

Author: Toronto Environmental Alliance
Publication Date: July 2008

This guide has received funding support from the Ontario Ministry of the Environment. Such support does not indicate endorsement by the Ministry of the contents of this material. The opinions expressed herein are those of the Toronto Environmental Alliance (TEA), as is the responsibility for any errors or omissions.

For more information:

Toronto Environmental Alliance
30 Duncan Street, Suite 201
Toronto, Ontario, M5V 2C3

Tel.: (416) 596-0660
Fax: (416) 596-0345
Web: www.torontoenvironment.org



Table of Contents

Introduction – Who is This Guide For and Why Was it Written?	4
Who is this guide for?	
What’s the goal of the guide?	
How to use this guide	
Context – Why tenant-led? Why energy conservation?	
The origins of the guide: Real world experiences	
Things to consider before running a tenant-led conservation program	
The 6-step guide	
Step 1 – Getting to Know the Neighbourhood	8
a. What makes up the neighbourhood?	
b. Finding answers to your questions	
c. Discovering the neighbourhood connections	
d. Uncovering the energy situation in the neighbourhood	
e. Creating a draft strategy	
Step 2 – Involving the Neighbourhood	16
a. Bouncing ideas off the neighbours	
b. Building a Neighbourhood Action Team	
Step 3 – Turning Great Ideas into a Plan	20
a. Establishing goals	
b. Choosing which actions to take	
c. Promoting the program and educating tenants	
d. Timing your actions	
Step 4 – Getting Ready to Act	26
a. Training the team	
b. Creating a team work plan	
c. Getting people excited about the program	
Step 5 – Turning the Plan into Action	30
a. Launching the new program with a fun event	
b. Getting people committed to energy conservation	
c. Putting your best foot forward: getting early results	
d. Sharing successes and maintaining momentum	
e. Offering ongoing support	
Step 6 – What’s Working and What’s Not?	35
a. Finding ways to measure success	
b. Learning lessons from what’s happened so far	
c. Identifying future actions	
Final Thoughts	38
Supplemental – Info & Ideas	39

Introduction - Who is this Guide for and Why was it Written?

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for tenant activists and advocacy groups who want to help tenants in their neighbourhood save energy and money. It aims to encourage tenant-led initiative in getting neighbourhoods organized and working towards common goals.

Goal of the guide

This guide provides a 6-step process to kick start tenant-run energy conservation activities in your neighbourhood. It offers a step-by-step approach to organizing and running neighbourhood efforts that will help reduce energy use in apartment buildings. Enabling tenants to run their own conservation program not only saves energy but strengthens our communities and inspires people to undertake further actions that can improve their lives.

How to use this guide

Each step in this guide begins with an overview of what key tasks are covered in the section and a list of what you can expect to accomplish by the end of each Step. We provide you with key advice to help you carry out the various tasks required in each Step, as well as tips related to the tasks. Throughout the guide you will also find sections marked with these symbols:

 Examples – to help relate a situation or task to a real-life example

 Info & Ideas – to indicate more information available at the end of the guide

Why tenant-led?

For too long, deciding what is ‘best’ for a neighbourhood has been the job of a few people who are non-residents. ‘Tenant-led’ programs, however, are designed *by* the people in the neighbourhood *for* the people in the neighbourhood.

Tenants lend credibility to a program. They lead by example and can typically get more tenants involved.

Tenants are far more likely to share their energy conservation knowledge or experience by showing others how to do it, or simply by taking the time to chat about it. What’s more, if a tenant needs help, it’s likely they can rely on a neighbour for assistance.

- *Tenants are a credible source*
As they share many of the same concerns or even local networks, they can relate to their fellow tenants in many ways that an ‘outside’ person can’t.
- *Tenants set an example for others*
Active tenants lead by example and use their familiar networks to get more neighbours involved.
- *Tenants involve others*
Tenants know the best ways to encourage neighbourhood interest and involvement. When people start to take action on something, it becomes harder for others to do nothing.

Why energy conservation?

Most information about saving energy is designed for home-owners, not renters. Tenants also have a right to know about their energy usage, its impacts and the benefits of saving energy. A program geared towards people living in apartments is long overdue.

In Ontario, close to 500,000 households are low-income tenants renting in the private market. Whether tenants pay for power on their own or it’s a ‘hidden cost’ included in their rent, they pay for energy use. As energy costs rise and more landlords separate energy bills from rental charges, tenants will want to find ways to save energy in their apartments. These tenants are more vulnerable to rising energy costs, as they often have to choose between heating their home, feeding their kids, and paying the rent because they can’t afford to do all three. Energy conservation can also offer other benefits that have a direct impact on tenants’ quality of life and living standards.

The origins of the guide: Real world experiences

This guide is the result of proven tenant-led programs: The Brahms Energy Savings Team (BEST) program which resulted in more comfortable units and a 7% reduction in energy use, and the Walpole is Reducing Energy (WiRE) program, an effort in which 88% of participants acknowledged that the program had helped them reduce electricity use.

Brahms Energy Savings Team (BEST) Program

In 2005, two apartment buildings on Brahms Avenue in North York were selected for an energy conservation program. Here, energy costs were included in the tenants’ rent, which meant people were unaware of energy usage and were not necessarily motivated to save. When approached about the program, the landlord, Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), committed to saving energy in hopes of reducing costs and greenhouse gas emissions.

Over the course of the five-month program run by Public Interest and Toronto Environmental Alliance, the BEST Program had many successes, including a participation rate of over 800 tenants! Needs and challenges were identified, various tenant networks involved, and a mutually beneficial strategy was designed that would motivate tenants to conserve energy.

Most important, the landlord got involved in making energy efficient improvements to the building, which included replacing old fridges and stoves with new energy saving models. This meant tenants were more inclined to do something, too. Through energy education activities and tenant-run events, Brahms residents discovered how simple energy saving solutions in their building created a more comfortable home while reducing the number of complaints about the building. The BEST program, along with the help of TCHC, reduced energy consumption by 7%!

Walpole is Reducing Energy (WiRE) Program

In 2007, a similar program was introduced at a TCHC townhouse complex on Walpole Avenue in downtown Toronto. Tenants in this neighbourhood paid for their utilities directly and were dealing with the reality of ever-higher bills. While TCHC had made a number of recent energy efficiency improvements, energy conservation education was lacking. Tenants felt that there were no other ways to save energy in their homes. With the help of some motivated tenant leaders determined to get their neighbourhood more involved, the Walpole is Reducing Energy (WiRE) program was born. By better understanding current tenant conservation activities, the team promoted new energy reducing tips and actions to try. Neighbourhood participation in the program exceeded 70% and nearly 90% of tenants surveyed said they learned new strategies and saved money as a result of the energy education efforts – even those who were frustrated with previous energy efficiency efforts.

Things to consider before running a tenant-led conservation program

If you have picked up this guide, it's likely you have a neighbourhood or specific apartment building in mind that could benefit from this type of outreach program. Whatever the case, here are some things to consider before starting a tenant-led energy conservation program.

- *Urgent neighbourhood issues will always take priority.*
- *Mutual benefits should exist.* Since tenants may or may not save money by saving energy, other benefits such as better maintenance, repairs, comfort, air quality or safety might deserve priority attention.
- *Active tenants lead the program.* It helps to have some identifiable active tenants that are ready to take the lead on the program.
- *Financial support is needed.* Your group will need financial support to run this program successfully, whether this is found through grants, fundraising, donations, in-kind support, or otherwise.

This guide cannot speak to all neighbourhood situations – it can only point tenant advocates in the right direction. While the major steps in this guide are meant to be followed in order, you may find that some things will happen sooner or later than expected. *The most important thing to keep in mind is that while every neighbourhood is different, including tenant priorities and abilities, a tenant-led program can reach and unite more tenants than ever thought possible!*

The 6-Step Guide



step
1

Getting to Know the Neighbourhood

In this section

- a. What makes up the neighbourhood?
 - b. Finding answers to your questions
 - c. Discovering the neighbourhood connections
 - d. Uncovering the energy situation in the neighbourhood
 - e. Creating a draft strategy
-

What to expect

A great deal of ground work is covered in Step 1 because you need to have a better understanding of the neighbourhood before you can initiate a tenant-led energy conservation program.

By the end of Step 1, you should have...

- An understanding of the neighbourhood structure [building(s), demographics, formal and service networks]
 - An understanding of the tenants' situations [individual stories, interests, informal networks]
 - Identified some specific hot topics related to the building(s) and/or tenants' units, and possible root causes [e.g. cracks can cause dust, bugs, air and water to leak into or out of building]
 - Connected the causes of concerns/complaints to possible energy-related outcomes [e.g. air leaks can cause drafts of cold air in winter, wasting energy used to heat apartment]
 - Collected energy-related information to identify opportunities for action
 - Created a draft strategy that outlines possible actions to take
-

a. What makes up the neighbourhood?

Before you start planning a neighbourhood program, it's important to know what encompasses the neighbourhood you are trying to reach. Generally, a neighbourhood is comprised of the building(s) people live in, the individual residents, and the various formal, informal and service networks tenants are connected to.

The building(s) tenants live in

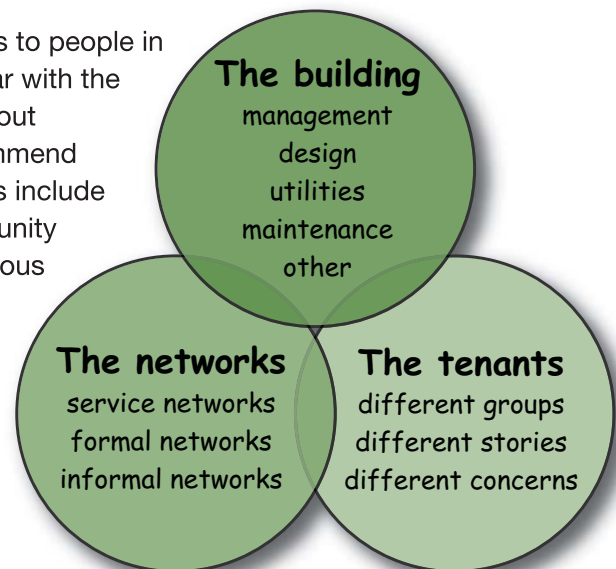
The details about the building(s) in the neighbourhood provide some key clues that may help uncover tenants' concerns or complaints. Some of the building information might connect to resolvable energy issues. While every building may be different, here are some things to consider:

- *The building's management and design*
Who owns, operates and works in the building(s)? Think about the structural details of the building (interior and exterior).
- *Utilities and maintenance*
Who pays the utility bills (landlord or tenants) and what types of utilities are used? What about repairs and maintenance work?
- *Other issues*
How might tenants describe their building? Is it accessible, clean, bug-free?

The networks

Networks are the connections people have with one another and with community groups. For this guide we've broken down the neighbourhood into three main types of networks, though you may define them differently.

- *Service networks*
These groups may offer services or programs to people in the neighbourhood. They may be very familiar with the neighbourhood, provide valuable insights about different groups in the building, and/or recommend successful types of outreach work. Examples include legal clinics, senior support agencies, community centres, day care centres, libraries, and religious institutions.
- *Formal networks*
Tenants may belong to cultural, social, or neighbourhood-based groups. Examples include clubs, committees, associations, councils, or volunteer efforts.
- *Informal networks*
Informal networks can be a powerful way to connect to tenants. Though common, they can be the hardest networks to access. Examples would include tenants with friends or family in the building; who know other parents in the building through their children; ride the bus or work with other tenants in the building, gather in common areas such as a nearby park.



The people who live in the building(s)

Accessing different networks of tenants is important, but so is getting to know tenants as individuals, too. When you are developing questions or discussion points about the various tenants' situations, be aware of the different experiences people have, their respective tenant relations, and what their common concerns might be.

- *Different groups of people*

There is likely to be a great deal of diversity in the neighbourhood, so it's important to respect that people are faced with different challenges and situations. Consider, for example, the variety of demographics, including different age groups, cultural and/or religious affiliations, languages, country of origin, and recent immigrants.

- *Different personal stories*

It's important to appreciate the differences tenants have and how they might apply to the program. A tenant who has lived in the same building for 10 years offers different insights than someone new to the neighbourhood. Someone's skill-set due to their line of work or past community involvement may prove invaluable. Even where tenants choose to gather helps define your neighbourhood and, by extension, your tenant-led program.

- *What people are talking about – the hot topics*

Key in on common complaints. The more you know about the hot topics that tenants are talking about, the easier it is to rally tenants around developing a workable solution to the issue or concern at hand.

Understand how tenants feel about their apartments and the building. Try to find answers to common questions such as:

- What are their favourite and least favourite (lack of play space for kids, broken laundry machines, poor maintenance) things about the neighbourhood?
- What are their main complaints and what would they like changed in the building and/or their apartment (e.g. better lighting in the parking lot, air quality in the apartment)?

b. Finding answers to your questions

Now that you have some ideas of what questions to ask, you need to develop some strategies for finding the answers. How you find out about the neighbourhood's hot topics may be very different from how you identify the various informal networks. Keep in mind that it is very important to involve tenants in every step of the program, including background research on their neighbourhood where possible. Our experience shows that a number of ongoing strategies should be used and that simple one-on-one approaches work best in the early stages.

Start out small

If you do not already have a strong presence in the neighbourhood, you need to start small and slowly build trust. Even if you have in-depth knowledge of the neighbourhood, you too may need to start small when linking tenant concerns to energy issues. The best way to

begin is to connect with key active tenants in the neighbourhood who'd be open to speaking with you – tenants who are connected to a number of formal and service networks, or who have already raised some of their concerns in the neighbourhood. By working with key tenants in the early stages, it will start a snowball effect that makes it that much easier to reach others over time. If your group doesn't know any tenants in the building directly, find a point of contact that you know through one of the neighbourhood networks and make connections from there.



Learn more about some early approaches in the 'Step 1: Info & Ideas' section found at the end of the guide.

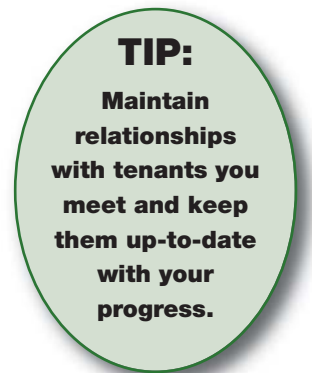
Branching out to the whole neighbourhood

After hearing firsthand from the tenants and/or tenant networks you've connected with, continue to branch out to the whole neighbourhood. Refine your approach by developing a short set of open-ended questions and discussion points that *you know* will get tenants talking. As always, be prepared to factor in any social, cultural, or language barriers along the way.

The different ways you can do this depend on whether you are trying to reach tenants through formal and service networks, or through more informal networks. This can range from working with associations and holding meetings to approaching tenants in small informal groups and one-on-one. Keep in mind that no matter how much progress you make, some people will not feel comfortable if randomly approached.



Learn more about how to branch out in the 'Step 1: Info & Ideas' section found at the end of the guide.



c. Discovering the neighbourhood connections

The tenant connections

The key to collecting information is to find things that connect the neighbourhood. As you learn what connects tenants to each other, you will start to see patterns in the neighbourhood that help to tailor the energy conservation program. Some tenants may have clear connections, such as being part of the same formal or service networks (religious group, child care program, committee, etc.). Less obvious connections might include informal networks (friend or family groups, a dog walking group, or a children's play group in the park), or common concerns or interests that tenants agree on.

All of these details are relevant because as you learn what connects tenants and how, you will start to identify outreach opportunities for your program. You will find certain people that can help develop and run the tenant-led program, and you will better understand what motivates and involves tenants in the neighbourhood. Check out the example below of how tenants who are parents might be connected and how that can apply to program design.



Example

If a neighbourhood apartment building has lots of children living there, their parents might be connected to each other through:

- **Common concerns or interests.** Parents worried about children's health and safety in the building. Children learning about environment in school.
- **Network connections.** Parents know each other through their children or through a parent council, soccer team, day care program, etc.

Simple connections can help tailor the tenant-led program because of:

- **Common gathering places and times.** To get parents involved, you might need to reach them at a school, day care centre, or playground and at certain times in the week.
- **Priorities and benefits.** Parents may need good reason to participate or consider certain program benefits more relevant than others.
- **Program planning needs.** Parents need program events and activities to be family oriented, or require special meeting times.

The hot topics that link to energy

Judging from the section above, it's not always easy to see what connects tenants or how it may apply your program. The same holds true when trying to determine how some hot topics shared by tenants might link to energy issues. Even if tenants express interest in saving energy or saving money on their utility bills, they still may not be motivated to take action or change their behaviour. You need to find ways to connect certain hot topics to energy use, and identify benefits beyond saving energy that will motivate tenants to take action. In addition to generating ideas, feedback and participation from tenants themselves, it can also help to talk to an energy expert and the landlord.

Get help from an energy advisor

Regardless of whether tenants pay their power bills directly or indirectly, what inspires people to take action on conservation can obviously differ. Some respond to issues of improved health and comfort; for others, money saved could go to much needed building repairs or improvements.

From our experience, it's best to work closely with energy advisors or experts who understand conservation practices in apartment buildings. Energy advisors can help you brainstorm the possible root causes of tenants' complaints or concerns and help you come up with possible solutions – solutions that can be achieved realistically by tenants. Energy advisors can also help to identify the benefits of conserving energy, including solutions to the hot topics brought up by tenants. Check out the example below of how a hot topic in an apartment building might link to energy.



Example

Tenant complaint: Stuffy and over-heated apartment units.

Root causes: The building may not be well designed, maintained or energy efficient, which are issues the landlord would need to address. Tenant activities might be contributing as well. Tenants could do simple things, such as improving air flow in their apartment to make it less stuffy, closing the curtains during the day to block out the hot sun, using stove and bathroom ventilation to get rid of hot moist air, and switching to energy saving light bulbs which give off less heat. Tenants will be more comfortable and rely less on cooling devices like fans and air conditioning.

Ask the advisor or expert to help you identify what some benefits may be for individual tenants, the entire building or for the landlord. What sort of actions might need to be taken by the landlord in order to improve the situation?



Check out the 'Step 1: Info & Ideas' section at the end of the guide for a website on finding an energy advisor in your area of Ontario.

Involve the landlord

Consider the benefits of a supportive landlord when running an energy conservation program. Most often, landlords are responsible for the heating system, appliances, general repairs and maintenance of the building. Many conservation opportunities are out of reach for tenants due to significant capital investment, building-wide repair or retrofits. In our experience, if the landlord gets involved in the program, the tenants are far more willing to take action on easy low-cost (or no-cost) energy saving measures.

Understand that motivating a landlord to participate can be a challenge. There is generally little incentive for landlords to invest money into making their apartment building more energy efficient since the current costs of energy use and repairs are passed directly on to the tenants via rental costs.

It's easier to make the case for support if the landlord realizes benefits, too. Perhaps your educational activities will improve tenant safety, or extend the life of capital investments the landlord has made (e.g. preventing mould build-up through better air exchange or preventing fire hazards by moving items away from the heaters). If tenants are more satisfied with their living conditions, there may be fewer vacancies in the building.

You may be able to make trade-offs with the landlord if you can make their job easier. For instance, if the landlord is constantly responding to certain service requests by tenants, they may be willing to do something for the program in return for help solving their problems.

Some of the activities outlined in the section below would rely on the landlord's participation. If you can get the landlord's support, it will be that much easier to uncover the energy situation in the neighbourhood.

d. Uncovering the energy situation in the neighbourhood

By now, you've spent some time getting acquainted with the neighbourhood, discovered what the hot topics are, and how they might be linked to energy. Some issues might be solved by improving energy efficiency, energy conservation, or both.

You'll need to identify what tenants currently do to save energy in their home as well as any energy-related issues they've noticed in the building's common spaces (like the hallways, lobby, laundry room, etc.). It's also important to involve the landlord where possible, as they are often the most able to take action on energy efficiency issues.

Energy efficiency

Concerning energy efficiency, focus mainly on the physical building and the units people live in. Assess factors such as:

- Building issues like the heating system, ventilation, insulation
- Unit-by-unit issues like the types of appliances and electronics tenants use

Energy audits are one of the best ways to find information, while it's also good to speak with the building's staff and other people knowledgeable on energy issues.

Energy conservation

Energy conservation reflects the actions of individuals and targets reducing energy usage through altering habits. This can include:

- Tenant awareness of energy use and waste, and the importance of conservation
- Understanding the mutual benefits of energy conservation such as a more comfortable unit, health and safety, saving money, cleaner air
- Changing behaviours and habits that currently result in energy wasting (e.g. cutting power to electronics when they aren't in use, turning off the lights, closing curtains to block out heat from the sun)

Understanding tenant habits around energy conservation can prove a challenge. Most people like to think they are doing more than they actually are, while those whose utilities are included in their rent may be completely unaware of their usage or related costs. Depending on whether you are trying to understand the building's energy situation or tenants' experiences in their units, you may need to try different techniques and approaches. For instance, you may want to organize an energy tour of the building, review building and/or tenant energy and maintenance costs, or do unit-by-unit energy assessments.



For some great ideas on how you can uncover the energy situation in a neighbourhood check out the 'Step 1: Info & Ideas' section at the end of the guide.

There are lots of great resources out there that give tips and ideas on how you can make living spaces more energy efficient and how people can conserve energy. Depending on the situation in the neighbourhood, certain energy saving options may work better than others.



Find out what options will work best for your neighbourhood by checking out some great energy-related resource links in the 'Step 1: Info & Ideas' section at the end of the guide.

e. **Creating a draft strategy**

A draft strategy is meant to start a more focused dialogue with the neighbourhood. It outlines the neighbourhood characteristics, what hot topics and energy links you plan to address, and a rough approach to deal with the issues. It offers talking points that will generate discussion around whether or not it's a good plan.

By including a few key areas in your draft strategy, you paint a bigger picture but also give people specific areas upon which to focus their attention.

- *Neighbourhood description*
This can be a short summary of what defines the neighbourhood (the building, tenants, and networks). It's important that there's dialogue around this and that the description is agreeable for everyone.
- *Hot topics*
These are the common concerns and complaints you have heard about from tenants and their networks, and that tenants will be in acting upon. Discussions with new tenants may present different hot topics, as well as causes or solutions to the issues.
- *Energy links*
These are the connections between the hot topics and energy use in the neighbourhood. This section can also include any interesting facts or details you've learned about the energy efficiency or level of energy conservation in the neighbourhood.
- *What we can do*
The most important part of the draft strategy is to give people examples of what the neighbourhood can do to fix the problem. This section suggests some ways your neighbours can take action.
- *Who can help*
It's important that individual tenants not shoulder the load of responsibility. Through the draft strategy, discuss whether certain people or organizations can assume specific responsibilities

TIP:
The draft strategy will evolve as more tenants provide feedback.

As mentioned above, the draft strategy evolves out of discussions with the neighbourhood and ideas around an action plan. What turns a draft strategy into an actual plan is how tenants respond to it. It's vital to share the draft strategy and any of your findings with as many people in the neighbourhood as you can. To find out how you can go about doing this, move on to Step 2 – Involving the Neighbourhood.

step
2

Involving the Neighbourhood

In this section

- a. Bouncing ideas off the neighbours
 - b. Building a Neighbourhood Action Team
-

What to expect

Tenants will be involved in every step of the program, but Step 2 is the first real opportunity for tenant input and leadership in designing a tailored action plan.

By the end of Step 2, you should have...

- Received feedback and ideas from tenants about draft strategy
 - Identified types of tenant leaders required to carry out program
 - Found potential tenant leaders through appropriate avenues [e.g. available networks, referrals, advertising, etc.]
 - Encouraged tenants to become tenant leaders through Neighbourhood Action Team
 - Looked for new team members on an ongoing basis
-

a. Bouncing ideas off the neighbours

After you've created a draft strategy, it's time to share it with all tenants. Tenant input is critical at this stage to help move the draft strategy into a manageable plan of action. There are many different types of feedback people may offer, and it's important that you're open to all of them. For instance, tenants might:

- *Confirm or contest*
Whether agreeing or disagreeing with details in the draft strategy, it's important to note them and re-evaluate the details that are being questioned.
- *Share knowledge*
Better program plans emerge when tenants are given the opportunity to share ideas, experiences and possible solutions. Some may only share their concerns or doubts, which then become suggestions on how to modify the strategy.

Step 2 - Involving the Neighbourhood

- *Ask questions*

Be prepared to respond to tenant questions about the draft strategy. Questions create an opportunity for more dialogue and often uncover tenant's motivations to participate.

- *React*

Expect tenant reaction – from those who disapprove of the program or who discourage participation in feedback sessions, to those concerned about issues and who want to take immediate action. All reactions are relevant and can help you better understand the needs, concerns, and motivations of the neighbourhood.

Consider what types of feedback you can expect in the neighbourhood, drawing on any lessons learned or past experiences tenants may share with you. There are many ways to share a draft strategy with tenants and generate valuable input, such as through focus groups, meetings, and one-on-one contacts. Talk with people in the neighbourhood to find out what best suits them and draw from any past program experiences. There should be a number of ways they can provide input, and you should consider how you can offer ongoing feedback opportunities to deal with new ideas or concerns as they arise.

In our experiences, some of the best ways of sharing a draft strategy are to host focus groups, talk to tenants one-on-one or in small informal groups where tenants typically gather. We also shared the draft strategy with the landlord, the superintendent, and some formal or service networks in the neighbourhood.



Check out some resource links and more information on getting tenant feedback in the 'Step 2: Info & Ideas' section at the end of the guide.

b. Building a Neighbourhood Action Team

No one person can undertake a neighbourhood program on their own. Regardless of the time and energy required, a single person can't represent the diversity of opinions, ideas, languages, and cultures in the neighbourhood. You need strongly committed tenants behind your strategy – tenants that want to help, who can take on responsibilities and who represent the various groups and networks of people living in the neighbourhood.

The tenants you bring together as a team will dictate what types of actions you'll be able to achieve. You've likely connected with many different groups of tenants by now, but remember that it's important to assemble a group that represents all the key tenant groups when building your action team.

TIP:

Try to collect tenant's contact information – they may be ideal team members or know someone who would do a good job.

What's the right mix of people?

When building a neighbourhood action team, consider looking for people that:

- *Are connected to other tenants*
Through family, friendships, formal associations – in general, finding someone who knows many people in the neighbourhood helps you share information with various groups. Don't overlook those people who may not know many neighbours but are confident and outgoing, as they may have a new capacity for reaching groups.
- *Can speak the neighbourhood languages*
All tenants should enjoy the opportunity to participate in the program, so be sure to find people who can communicate in the relevant languages in your neighbourhood.
- *Are enthusiastic*
Some participants are excited about the idea from the outset, while others are encouraged as the ideas become more popular.
- *Are good listeners*
Team members should be prepared to discuss issues with tenants, not just talk 'at' them. Good listening skills help tenants feel comfortable about sharing their opinions or asking questions.
- *Have time to spare*
While lots of people may support the idea, not everyone can commit time towards planning and attending meetings.
- *Can offer experience or skills*
People who have past experience working in a team, organizing an event, teaching people and fundraising can be invaluable. Others may understand energy issues because they're a technician, electrician, or simply have considerable personal experience.

How do you find team members?

You may know what types of people to look for, but how to find them and encourage them to become a team member? Publicly advertising for involvement may be the easiest, but as it's open to anyone and everyone, that approach carries some risks. Those that are interested but not the right fit may be offended if they're not invited to participate. They may develop a negative impression of the program right away. If you can, try to consult with associations, councils or committees in the neighbourhood that may have recruited residents in the past, such as a school council that recruits parents, etc.

Based on our past programs, here are some suggestions about finding dependable team members:

- *Make a short list of tenants you have already met*
Through formal and informal discussions during your outreach, you've assembled a list of prospective team members. Think of which candidates best reflect the key qualities you're looking for and approach them.

Step 2 - Involving the Neighbourhood

- *Get help from other tenants*
Some tenants may not be able to participate, but know others that would be a good fit. Request their assistance in recruiting tenants. Past experience indicates that tenants are often much more successful in recruiting fellow tenants than an outsider because they know who'd fit the job.
- *Get referrals through formal and service networks*
People who work in the neighbourhood or run certain programs and services could likely make some dependable recommendations.
- *Introduce the program concept publicly*
Tenants with immediate interest in getting involved may take the initiative to contact you.

Remember that you can't always recruit everyone at once. It takes time to build up a team, but once you have one or two tenants committed it gets easier. Don't overload early recruits with work; introduce activities and training gradually. Reassure new team members that the work can be exciting, rewarding, and that neighbours appreciate their efforts. Happy team members are more likely and willing to help you find new recruits through their various networks.

It is hard to say what will motivate tenants to become part of a Neighbourhood Action Team. In our experience, tenants were compensated for their work by the hour, but this was not their only motivation to be part of the team. Closely consider what would influence their decision to be part of team before you choose to advertise the positions as jobs, volunteer opportunities, or otherwise.

TIP:

Remember that you can't always recruit everyone at once. It takes time to build up a team, but once you have one or two tenants committed it gets easier.

step
3

Turning Great Ideas into a Plan

In this section

- a. Establishing goals
 - b. Choosing which actions to take
 - c. Promoting the program and educating tenants
 - d. Timing your actions
-

What to expect

The first team job is developing the draft strategy into a workable plan that the neighbourhood supports. The neighbourhood action plan should have specific goals, practical strategies that will achieve these goals, a variety of actions to engage the neighbourhood, and a schedule to guide the timing of the program.

By the end of Step 3, you should have...

- Established both neighbourhood and individual goals for the program
 - Developed a tailored menu of energy saving options that all tenants can take action on
 - Designed strategies for achieving goals, including ways to promote the program and both engage and enable tenants to conserve energy
 - Created a schedule for the timing of goals, strategies, and actions that considers all influencing factors
-

a. **Establishing goals**

Of prime importance is ensuring people agree on neighbourhood goals. Though the goals may not all be related to energy conservation, they should reflect the information you've gathered from your neighbours.

Some goals might focus on saving money, improving comfort and safety, or environmental improvements such as cleaner air and saving energy. Goals may be designed around individual involvement or for the entire neighbourhood to work towards. You may also establish internal goals for your Neighbourhood Action Team to encourage a greater sense of accomplishment when educating their neighbours.

Step 3 – Turning Great Ideas into a Plan

- *Set realistic goals*
People generally won't put their trust in big goals and it could set the team up for failure. Take care to identify goals that any tenant could undertake.
- *Set some measurable goals*
While it's not always possible, it helps you track progress and celebrate successes.
- *Set goals that reach everyone*
Try to have goals that can be reached by individuals, by team members, and by the whole neighbourhood working together.



Examples

An internal **team goal** might be to teach at least 40% of the households in the building how to save energy.

A **tenant goal** might be committing to at least three energy saving actions.

A **neighbourhood goal** might be to get half the neighbourhood to sign a petition asking the landlord to change the old lights over to energy saving bulbs.

b. Choosing which actions to take

By now you have likely developed a short list of the best energy conservation actions to promote, based on the draft strategy, tenant feedback, and the established goals (above). The actions you choose should result in real changes in energy saving behaviour and activity. It's key to remember that neighbourhood actions should start small and simple, and gradually build momentum over time. This applies both to tenants eager to save energy as well as for the Neighbourhood Action Team who will be new to running the program.

Creating a menu of energy saving options

Tenants need options

When devising tenant strategies aimed at saving energy, remember that people need options. Don't expect people to engage every option you offer. Instead, offer a menu of energy saving options, ensuring they are 'doable' and achievable by all tenants. You may also choose to have two different menus: one for saving energy in your own apartment, and one for saving energy in the building.

TIP:

Neighbourhood actions should start small and simple, and gradually build momentum over time.

A small menu is a better menu

By limiting the number of energy saving options offered, it's easier to get tenants started. Not everyone will be willing to save energy at the same level, so it's better to get lots of tenants committing to a few energy saving actions rather than a handful of tenants taking action on a large menu! We suggest choosing 3 to 6 actions for people to choose from.

Gradual actions add up

By starting with simple, small energy saving actions tenants build upon what they've learned. As tenants see how easy it can be to save energy, they will embrace new energy saving options when they're ready. Tenants who are particularly active in the program, or who were already saving energy at home, become tenant champions. They act as role models for others and can encourage fellow tenants to participate. If they wish to do more, they can look to the team for new suggested actions.

Menus should be tested

It's important to always test the energy saving menu with tenants before finalizing the plan. What may sound like a simple, easy action may in fact be more complicated than you think! Testing the menu with tenants (through a focus group) will reveal the barriers that might prevent tenants from taking action. You may discover a better solution or come up with new energy saving actions to put on the menu.



Get some examples of energy saving menus we've used in past programs in the 'Step 3: Info & Ideas' section at the end of the guide.

c. Promoting the program and educating tenants

Giving the program an identity

As with any promotional effort you see in magazines or on television, you need to advertise the neighbourhood program if you want people to know about it. This can be done very affordably. Two key aspects of the program identity are the program's name and the message(s) you wish to communicate.

What's the program's name?

Start by coming up with a special name for your program so people know who you are. If you can find someone creative, you might want to develop a recognizable logo for your posters or handouts. When team members organize, promote or run activities and events, they should always use the program's name. Recall the names of our past programs: Brahm's Energy Savings Team (BEST) and Walpole is Reducing Energy (WiRE).

TIP:

Get feedback from tenants about the best ways to promote the program and what tools and activities they prefer.

Step 3 – Turning Great Ideas into a Plan

Here are some things to think about when considering a name:

- Is it easy to remember?
- Does it create a sense of ownership or identity in the neighbourhood? (e.g. does it use the neighbourhood's name?)
- Does it sound positive / encouraging?
- Does it relate to your goals or actions?

What's your message?

Every product or service carries a message, which is sometimes called the 'selling point'. Consider, for example, a product promoted as 'easy to use' or that will 'save you money'. In an energy saving program, you need to tailor the messages to the tenants you are trying to reach. The Neighbourhood Action Team may be in the best position to come up with the messaging, not only because they will put it in their own words and ensure it is properly translated (if needed), but because they'll be the ones passing the message on to fellow tenants. Your messages should:

- *Be easily understood*
Messages should use simple language and be easy to read. Make sure the message translates well if communicating in other languages.
- *Be simple to relate to*
Tenants should be able to connect to the messages and be willing to pass them on to friends, family, neighbours, etc.
- *Motivate*
Messages should be positive and encourage tenants to take action.
- *Link hot topics to energy issues*
Messages should help tenants identify links between the issues they've raised and the program's energy saving goals and actions.



Example

One message used in the WiRE Program was, "Small things add up and cost you money". The goal was to motivate tenants to save energy through small, doable actions, such as changing their bulbs and using power bars. The amount saved individually might have been small, but collectively, it made a difference.

Different types of advertising and communication

The types of advertising you choose will reflect the groups you are trying to reach and the goals of the program. Reaching an entire family with a message compared to a single elderly person could be completely different. Similarly, it's important to understand the purpose for advertising. Are you trying to keep tenants up-to-date on upcoming activities and events, or are you trying to get people to sign up for an energy assessment?

Our experiences indicate that one of the best ways to promote the program is for tenant team leaders to go around and tell tenants all about it. This “word-of-mouth” type of advertising uses existing networks as a means of passing along information and encouraging action. Other types of advertising, such as print media, events and activities offer up other forms of promotion that complement the word-of-mouth approach.

❖ **For more information and examples on ways to promote the program overall and specific tenant actions, check out the 'Step 3: Info and Ideas' section at the end of the guide.**

Program education

Who's your audience?

Teaching tenants about energy conservation is going to depend on who you are trying to reach. For instance, educating children on energy conservation is going to demand a different approach than trying to teach their parents. Draw on what you've learned about the various neighbourhood networks, including how, where, and when tenants connect with each other to help identify your audience(s).

What tools and activities can help tenants learn?

Since people learn in many different ways (e.g. reading, listening, watching, and doing) design educational materials and activities that will work for any learning style. Consider the menu of energy saving options you've selected, and come up with ideas on how you can help tenants connect the hot topics to these energy saving options, and what sorts of tools and activities would motivate and enable tenants to take action.

In our experience, a variety of tools and activities were used to teach tenants about energy use and encourage conservation. These included give-away events that put free energy saving devices and tips into the hands of tenants, as well as educational activities such as energy demonstrations, workshops, and energy assessments.

❖ **Check out some tools and activities examples that have worked for us in past programs in the 'Step 3: Info and Ideas' section at the end of the guide. Also, refer back to some of the activities suggested in Step 1 on how to uncover the energy situation.**

As with the menu of energy saving options discussed earlier, all possible educational tools and activities should be tested with groups of tenants before deciding to use them. Budgetary issues will influence your decisions as will understanding any limitations the Neighbourhood Action Team may face.



Example

Tenants may already use power bars in their units, but they aren't aware that power bars can save energy if you get into the habit of turning off the switch when you aren't using the devices that are plugged into it. In this case, tenants have the energy saving tool (power bar), but may need more information a demonstration activity to encourage them to change their habit.

d. **Timing your actions**

Having determined your different audiences and the types of actions you want to do, now it's time to develop a schedule of when and how the actions will be carried out. The timing of the outreach activities need to be closely considered and will rely on a number of factors including:

- *Length of the program*

What can be achieved depends on how much time you can commit to running the program. Ideally, the program should continue for as long as the neighbourhood wants it to, but groups are often restricted by a fixed length of time. Our experiences suggest a minimum of 6 to 12 months is required to do an effective tenant-led energy conservation program.

- *Seasons*

During which seasons the programs runs can dictate whether you run energy saving activities geared around tenants heating up their apartment or cooling it down. It can also influence where and when tenants gather.

- *Gradual level of interest*

Tenants are likely to become increasingly interested in the program as time goes by. Though the program may be slow to start, as more people learn about the program benefits and get to know the team members, the greater the level of interest.

- *Gradual level of participation*

Participants will likely want to start with smaller, easy-to-do actions. As they start to see personal results, they may be willing to take part in more challenging or time-consuming actions. Tenant participation is also influenced by the level of landlord involvement.

- *Ongoing outreach*

The program needs to be visible in the community at all times. Make sure there is an ongoing balance of activities and events, and that tenants always have the opportunity to ask for assistance or discuss matters with team members.

- *Concurrent action*

If other groups or networks are running programs, activities, and events at the same time you are, explore opportunities to work together if there are some mutual benefits or goals.

- *Leaving room for flexibility*

As every program evolves differently, always stay open to change and be sure you're addressing tenants' needs. You may need to revisit your action plan if certain outreach activities prove challenging or unsuccessful, or if you are receiving complaints or requests regarding educational tools and activities.

- *The size of your team*

You will likely start out with a small team and more people will want to join as time goes by. However, what you can do and how much time you require depends on your team's abilities.

TIP:

Tenant actions must be well timed. This requires a balance of pre-planning and ongoing flexibility to handle all the different factors.

step
4

Getting Ready to Act

In this section

- a. Training the team
 - b. Creating a team work plan
 - c. Getting people excited about the program
-

What to expect

At this point, you have a plan and are almost ready to launch the program. Using your plan as a guide, you need to ready the Neighbourhood Action Team to implement the program and build anticipation for the program launch amongst tenants.

By the end of Step 4, you should have...

- Determined best approaches for training the team
 - Trained the team on all aspects of running the program (e.g. working as a team, being a good listener, a motivator, setting an example, being a teacher)
 - Developed a team work plan
 - Relied on the Neighbourhood Action Team to help design promotional techniques and actively promote the program (e.g. word of mouth)
 - Started building awareness among tenants by creating excitement/interest in the program
-

a. Training the team

The types of team training required will reflect your team's skills and experience, as well as the types of outreach you intend to do. This guide will only review the key principles of training that will apply to any tenant-led program.

When designing a training program, keep some of these key elements in mind:

- *Working as a team*
Some or all of the tenants on the team may not have worked as part of neighbourhood team before. They need to learn how to communicate with each other and share responsibilities.

Step 4 – Getting Ready to Act

- *Logistics and planning*
The team needs to agree on a work plan and follow a schedule of set tasks, as well as learn to maintain confidentiality, and record tenant information and feedback.
- *Doing outreach work*
The team needs to feel comfortable and confident reaching out to fellow tenants. Training should include communication skills such as active listening, motivating tenants, using networks to connect with tenants, reporting and resolving situations as they arise.
- *Understanding energy issues*
The team must understand any energy issue or conservation technique being used in the program. They should be able to explain it in their own words to fellow tenants.
- *Educating tenants*
The team needs to learn various ways to teach tenants how to take action on the menu of energy saving options. Training should include opportunities to practice the educational activities among themselves.

TIP:

Be prepared to run ongoing training as new situations and questions arise.

It's important to recognize that training will be an ongoing activity throughout the program and may require different approaches. Recruiting and training tenants new to the team may require some one-on-one training that can be carried out by experienced team members. As tenant participation in the program builds, new questions and situations may come up that the team is unprepared to handle. Depending on the issue, expert assistance may be required to help come up with a solution.



Get some helpful tips and resources on designing and running training sessions by checking out the 'Step 4: Info and Ideas' section at the end of the guide.

b. Creating a team work plan

Once the team has been trained, roles and responsibilities should be assigned. Team members will all offer different strengths, which will help determine who does what, and it's good to get a sense of the members who will assume more responsibilities over time. Based on the action plan, there will be many team member tasks that will need attention. For every energy conservation action you promote to tenants, the Neighbourhood Action Team may have a number of tasks to complete such as organizing actions and involving, educating, and supporting tenants to take action.

Some actions, such as ongoing tenant outreach, are the responsibility of all team members. How team members choose to do this may vary depending on the groups and networks they are connected to.

The main things that the work plan should address are:

- The specific actions that will be taken
- Who is responsible for carrying out each action? Is it only the team members or are volunteers, community partners, etc. involved?
- Which groups of tenants will be involved?
- How will the actions be carried out?
- When will the actions take place? Is it a one-time action or something that will be done over a certain time period? What's the deadline?
- What (if any) type of follow-up is required? Does the team need to check back with the tenants to see how they are doing, get feedback from them, or publicize the results of the action to the neighbourhood?

TIP:
For every energy conservation action you promote to tenants, the Neighbourhood Action Team may have a number of tasks to complete.

❖ There are lots of available resources on how to develop a team work plan but this will depend greatly on your team. Check out the 'Step 4: Info & Ideas' section at the end of the guide for a website that can help get you started.

c. Getting people excited about the program

As discussed in the promoting the program section, your neighbours should be familiar with the program's logo and messages. It's good to get this underway before the official start to the program so people have time to understand the idea and get excited about its potential. Plus, doing work ahead of time may help encourage participation.

When building up excitement, consider advertising it a few different ways so people can see, hear and experience the program.

See the program

Tenants can 'see' the program by using printed media, such as posters and pamphlets, that will promote the program's name and/or logo. If you are really organized, you might already have some events, educational activities or other actions scheduled. Advertise them on your printed media so people have something to look forward to.

- Post printed media such as posters, banners, flyers, etc. Remember to get permission from the building superintendent first.
- Put up large printed media in high traffic areas such as the lobby, elevator, laundry room or on a notice board.
- Distribute flyers to people you see, or slip them under people's doors or in mailboxes.

Step 4 – Getting Ready to Act

Hear about the program

It's important to find a way for people to hear about the program as well as see it. The best approach is through 'word of mouth' – via people who pass along information during a conversation.

- Encourage team members to actively talk to their neighbours about the program, and communicate key messages to get people interested. Explain how the goals and actions of the program are connected to hot topics that everyone has been talking about.
- Hearsay can work in your favour! If team leaders build up enough interest, tenants may pass the message on to others in the neighbourhood.
- Share program information with formal and service networks in the area so that they can pass on the information to tenants they meet.

Experience the program

A tenant-led program like this may be new experience for the neighbourhood. It might help to get tenants familiar with the tenant-led model before the program starts.

- Hold an information meeting so that the Neighbourhood Action Team can tell people about what the program is all about and what to expect in the coming months.
- Set up a small display in the lobby where people can speak with the team, ask questions and pick up information.

There are plenty of other ways to build up excitement and interest in the program. The Neighbourhood Action Team should be aware of what your neighbourhood would be receptive to, but you can also draw on past experiences that have been successful in the neighbourhood.

step
5

Turning the Plan into Action

In this section

- a. *Launching the new program with a fun event*
 - b. *Getting people committed to energy conservation*
 - c. *Putting your best foot forward: getting early results*
 - d. *Sharing successes and maintaining momentum*
 - e. *Offering ongoing support*
-

What to expect

The team is finally ready to implement the program! By reaching out to tenants in a variety of ways, the team members will encourage, enable, and support tenants who are taking action to save energy and reach the program goals.

By the end of Step 5, you should have...

- Launched the program with a fun, neighbourhood-wide event
 - Started program using engaging strategies that build tenant interest, commitment and confidence in energy conservation
 - Gradually worked tenants up to more challenging energy-saving actions
 - Continued putting feedback mechanisms in place between tenants and tenant leaders, as well as within the team
 - Measured participation, actions, challenges and improvements as indicators of success
 - Celebrated and share successes to encourage tenants' continued involvement
-

a. Launching the new program with a fun event

The best way to start a new program is to hold a fun event for the whole neighbourhood. While your first event is more about having fun than learning about energy issues, it's a great chance for neighbours to meet each other, to meet team members, and learn more about the program. Based on past programs, we know people are more likely to respond well to fun, social events.

How will people hear about it?

As with getting people excited about the program, ‘word-of-mouth’ advertising will be most effective. Make sure your team members are prepared to talk to lots of people in the building leading up to the exciting event. This approach helps raise the comfort level at your event, too, as neighbours will recognize team members who welcome them and will also feel a sense of confidence in those team members to successfully carry out the event.

It’s also recommendable to invite some representatives from community groups or from the City (e.g. a program coordinator, City Councillor, Mayor) to join you at the launch. This might make your program look a bit more official and help to build more support for the program. Be sure to invite the building superintendent and/or other landlord representatives so that s/he feels part of the program.

Who’s coming?

Organizing a fun event, such as a barbeque, will bring together a diversity of neighbours, but always think about who may be attending so you can make sure everyone will have a good time. Some examples might include making sure the event is ‘child-friendly’ so that more parents are able to attend, or ensuring that events are culturally appropriate so everyone feels welcome.

What’s the message?

This event can be the perfect time to distribute information about upcoming events and education opportunities. Draw from some of the examples given in Step 3 on how to promote the program or certain actions. Examples might include a ‘give-away’ event where you offer materials that people can take home with them such as stickers for the children or a calendar of upcoming events.

How did it go?

It’s important to keep track of which tenants (and how many) attended your event. Encourage people to share their name, unit number, and if possible their contact information. As these are the first potential participants, your goal should be to stay in touch with them so you can encourage their continued participation in program activities and alert them about upcoming events.

It’s important to also realize how these events benefit your team members. This event might be the very first time your team organized something. They will learn a lot about advertising, organizing and running an event. As they will be busy handing out information and talking to their neighbours about the program, they will meet lots of new people and gain their trust. They will feel rewarded by the success of the event and feel more confident in their abilities. Of course, this event will also be a great way for the team members to find more tenants who want to participate in the program or become part of the team.

b. Getting people committed to energy conservation

After your launch event and prior to offering educational activities and tools that address saving energy, your Neighbourhood Action Team should encourage more people to participate in the program.

It's one thing to get people to attend a social event, but it's quite another to commit them to take action on something. In trying to convince someone that saving energy is important, remember what has been learned from neighbours in the first place. Remind them of the hot topics everyone talks about and how some of those issues are actually connected to energy use.

While a key approach is for team members to speak directly with people about their energy use, there are a few other ways to start getting people to commit to energy reductions in their homes and building.

All team members must be committed to saving energy

Team members should practice what they preach. In asking people to try and save energy in their unit, the team member should already be practicing this in their own home. When talking to people about how they can save energy in their apartment, the team member should be able to point to some of their own experiences. This sets a good example and shows people how easy it can be to save energy.

Find tenant champions who are already saving energy

Ask the team if they would volunteer themselves, or know of any other tenants who can act as tenant champions. Tenants who are already conserving energy, or have found other ways to make their home more liveable, can become spokespersons for the program! Try to get a tenant champion to participate in an information meeting, help lead a workshop, or profile them in a newsletter.

Start with people you already know in the building

By now, your team has gotten to know lots of people in the neighbourhood. It's far easier for them to get commitments from family, friends and networks than it is through people who have never heard of you or the program.

Get tenants to sign a pledge

Past experience has shown that when tenants dedicate themselves to something they are more likely to follow through with their actions. This might mean challenging tenants to commit to doing a few of the energy saving actions, possibly in exchange for some energy saving devices during a giveaway event. An example might be for tenants to sign their name to a neighbourhood-wide pledge that says, "I will do three new things to save energy" that is based on the menu of energy saving actions promoted by the program.

c. Putting your best foot forward: getting early results

As a team, you can put your ‘best foot forward’ by offering at least one of your more exciting energy saving activities, materials or tools at the launch of the program. For example, in past programs giveaways were one of the first energy education activities planned for tenants. Giveaway items included energy saving devices such as power bars or light bulbs, as well as durable items that promote the program or offer energy tips, such as a magnet or calendar of upcoming events.

These kinds of fun, easy, free energy education activities will catch the attention of a lot of people in the building! Like the first social event you hold, a giveaway event attracts a lot of people, gives team members a great chance to talk to neighbours, and is a highly visible activity that allows everyone to get involved. Tenants come away from the event with actual tools or tips that encourage and enable them to start saving energy right away. This type of event should be something memorable to the neighbourhood, so that when team members are going around encouraging tenants to save energy, they can recall that early success.



d. Sharing successes and maintaining momentum

One of the best ways to keep the excitement and participation rates growing is to share and celebrate program successes. It’s important that you find ways to track your success, maintain records and feedback, then share that information with the whole neighbourhood. By doing so, you create more interest in the program and build momentum for participation in ongoing activities and events.

Track your numbers

Always keep track of your numbers and your participants during any event or activity. You should know how many people came out to an event or participated in an activity, and which tenants were represented. When participation is strong, use those numbers to acknowledge tenant interest or commitment to saving energy.

Track your feedback

What did people think of the giveaway event? What did they learn from the energy demonstration activity? Hearing from tenants directly helps to track successes that can be difficult to measure otherwise. Encourage team members to talk to the tenants that participated, or ask them to fill out a small evaluation form. Team members could also talk to other tenants to learn why they didn’t get involved.

Track your progress

It’s important to track your progress and understand what actions have brought you closer to your goals. Progress may refer to how close you are to reaching a certain team goal, or it

TIP:

The team should be getting constant feedback from tenants in order to make future actions more successful.

may be a neighbourhood-wide progress report. In the BEST program, we updated a 'thermometer' that measured how many apartments had joined the Brahms Energy Savings Team and indicated how close they were to reaching their goal.

It's important to keep the program plan flexible and open to change. The team should be using all of the feedback and information on participation rates to make the future actions more successful. For instance, if you notice that it is always the same people at every event, or that certain groups of tenants aren't participating, you may need to re-evaluate your actions or find new ways to branch out and get more tenants interested.

Celebrate successes

You can keep tenants motivated and encourage greater participation by showcasing the neighbourhood's achievements. Doing this conveys a sense of ownership and pride among tenants. Success stories can help build momentum since they act as proof that the program is going in the right direction and doing great things to help tenants in the neighbourhood.

Team members should mention success stories when rallying tenants to participate in the next action. Those that have already participated will hopefully maintain their interest, and those who didn't participate might change their mind upon hearing about the event's success.

Deciding what successes are worth celebrating can be a challenge. Generally, a success is worth celebrating when you reach one of your goals, but it's also important to recognize certain cornerstone achievements that are not specific goals. For example, convincing the landlord to participate in the program may be a huge achievement that should be recognized or even celebrated, depending on the neighbourhood situation.

While the team might know that a certain activity or event was a great success, it only becomes a neighbourhood success story once you tell everybody the great news! Even successes that aren't easily measured, such as tenant satisfaction with the program, can be celebrated as long as you find the right ways to share it with the neighbourhood.



Check out the 'Step 5: Info and Ideas' section for some great examples of how you can celebrate neighbourhood successes over the course of the program.

e. Offering ongoing support

While the program is running, both the tenants and the team will need ongoing support. Tenants might need help taking action on all the energy saving recommendations. They need to know that there are team members to help them with any questions, concerns or feedback. The team may need support in the form of training or some other form of assistance. Holding regular team meetings helps ensure that tenant leaders have a good idea of what their next task will be while providing an opportunity to ask questions and share tenant feedback.

step
6

What's Working and What's Not?

In this section

- a. Finding ways to measure success
 - b. Learning lessons from what's happened so far
 - c. Identifying future actions
-

What to expect

While you should be continually monitoring and evaluating the program through ongoing team meetings and tenant feedback, Step 6 offers an opportunity to take what has been learned and turn it into program lessons. It's also the time to consider if and when you would take on any future actions to build upon your energy conservation efforts.

By the end of Step 6, you should have...

- Continued forum for tenant and tenant leader reporting, monitoring, evaluation and feedback
 - Learned lessons of what works best in the neighbourhood that can be applied to future activities
 - Identified future opportunities for neighbourhood action (if applicable)
-

a. Finding ways to measure success

As mentioned earlier in the guide, tracking numbers are a good way to record successes and shortfalls. Another way to measure success is by encouraging feedback from tenants and team members. Following an activity or event, talk to people to get feedback regardless of whether they did or did not participate. You will learn a great deal about how or why something is successful just by talking to people.

Get tenants to compare bills with others and calculate the savings or, if the landlord pays, ask them to give you the information so you can calculate savings.

Post-program surveys are another option. With your team, write out some questions that you would like answered. They should reflect the key goals and actions outlined in the program action plan and refer to specific tenant problems or discomforts you were trying to

overcome. The survey can also be a chance to evaluate the work of the team members, the usefulness of the tools, events and activities offered to tenants.

Some examples of what we've included in feedback surveys include:

- Asking tenants what energy conservation materials and tools they remember from the program
- An evaluation of the quality of the materials and tools (e.g. were they easy to understand and to put into practice, etc.)
- Inquiring what program events and other outreach activities they remember. Did they participate or not?
- Determining what they have learned about saving energy and what actions they participated in
- Asking tenants what (if any) benefits they have experienced as a result of the program
- Having an open-ended section where people can write in their own comments about the program

TIP:

Come up with ways to measure program successes and learn from program feedback and experiences.

b. Learning lessons from what's happened so far

There are bound to be many lessons learned over the course of the program. Some lessons will involve measuring your successes (as discussed above), while other lessons will reflect the team's experiences. There are a few ways to keep track of the team's experiences and lessons learned:

Regularly scheduled team meetings

Meetings allow members to share their experiences conducting outreach and education. Be sure to put someone in charge of recording notes at these meetings for later reference.

Team feedback sessions

At the end of the program or after a certain amount of time has gone by, all the team members should have a chance to evaluate the program and the work they have done. This may include a few group sessions moderated by your group, and/or some sort of evaluation form that they could fill out.



Check out the **Step 6: Info & Ideas'** section at the end of the guide to see an example of feedback questions asked of tenant team members during the WiRE Program.

Step 6 – What’s Working and What’s Not?

These lessons – what worked in the program and what didn’t – create a program’s history. If anyone ever wanted to run a new program in the neighbourhood, they may want to read about lessons learned so that they can try to duplicate successes and avoid past mistakes.

These lessons may also help other neighbourhoods do what you did – and your team can be the experts that help them along! We, at the Toronto Environmental Alliance, would also love to hear about your program, including its successes and challenges.

c. Identifying future actions

Based on all the work that has been done to date, the progress made and the lessons learned, you may also identify future actions. These may be actions that were in the original program plan but could not be carried out, or new potential actions that have arisen based on new information, new needs, or an ever increasing desire by the tenants to go one step further. It is our hope that if you choose to continue with future actions that the Neighbourhood Action Team will be able to take it on. Remember that tenants may not live in the same neighbourhood for more than a few years, so expect to seek out new team members, but also try to stay in touch with those that leave the neighbourhood.

Final Thoughts

When we first started our energy conservation programs, we weren't sure what to expect because no one in Toronto had ever done anything like this before. Soon, though, we were very impressed at the level of interest tenants had in conserving energy, regardless of whether they paid their energy bills directly or through their rent. Tenants were willing to share their ideas and concerns and worked enthusiastically with the tenant animators to develop a program tailored to their needs. And once the programs were running, tenants participated actively and were glad to join their own neighbours working hard to run a program to save energy in the neighbourhood.

While each program was unique, what they shared in common was that their success was a result of the hard work and dedication of the tenant team members who encouraged, educated, enabled and supported their fellow tenants to save energy.

It was this tenant-led enthusiasm for these programs that got us thinking about developing this guide. When we made the decision to write a guide that would help others run similar programs, we were presented with two daunting challenges: first, every tenant-led energy conservation program will be different. This simply reflects the fact that each community has different priorities and its members have different strengths and weaknesses. How, then, does one create a guide that incorporates this fact? If the information and advice is too general, it doesn't help. If it's too specific, it also doesn't help.

The second challenge was the fact that no one had ever developed a guide like this before. So, we constantly asked ourselves: what do we include in the guide and how long should it be? If we provided too much information, potential users might find the guide too long. On the other hand, if we kept it short, the guide might not have the information people need to develop their own program.

This guide is our best effort at answering these two challenges. We hope that this guide provides you with some useful tools and insights to run a tenant-led energy conservation program. More importantly, we hope it will motivate you to actually act.

Finally, this guide isn't just about energy conservation. It's about creating neighbourhood capacity to work together and create more liveable communities. So, even if the early results you see are small steps towards energy conservation, they are major steps in terms of building neighbourhood capacity.

We wish you the best of luck in designing, developing, and running your own tenant-led energy conservation program. And don't forget to let us know about your successes!

Supplemental

step
1

Info & Ideas



Finding answers to your questions

Starting out small

Find demographic data on the neighbourhood

If you don't already know, it may help to use statistical data to get a better idea of the neighbourhood's demographic (types of housing, age groups, financial situation, languages spoken, recent immigrants, etc.). A free and reliable online resource to find this information is Statistics Canada's Census Tract Profiles. By using the most recent version of the neighbourhood's profile data, you can plan elements of your information gathering strategy that may vary depending on the group you are approaching. For instance, if you know there is a large population of tenants that are recent immigrants who speak a certain language, it will be important to find tenant contacts in the building that can communicate with them and encourage their involvement.

Work with tenant contacts

One of your first contacts with the neighbourhood should be a small number of active tenants, preferably those involved in neighbourhood activities already. Ideally, this group of tenants should represent the diversity of the building and be willing to spend some time helping you understand the neighbourhood situation better. Hold discussions or an interview with these tenant contacts where you can ask them for more information on the building they live in, insight into what they (and their neighbours) are experiencing, and any community networks they know of.

These tenants will act as key informants, people who can tell you about the neighbourhood, but will also tell the neighbourhood about you. By doing so, the tenant contacts help raise awareness about your outreach plan before you have started your work.

If you don't already have contacts with specific tenants in the building, you can find tenant contacts by talking to various community groups, clubs, associations and service agencies in the area. They may be able to recommend or introduce you to someone who lives in the building.

Tap into tenant networks

Using your current connections with tenant contacts in the building, try to reach out to more people by going through their various formal and informal networks. You can mention that you know someone they know, who was willing to answer your questions. Have discussions or interviews with tenants from these groups, and mention to them that you'd like to hear the opinions of more people in the building. They may be able to help connect you to new tenants.

Find tenant messengers to help collect information

Now that tenants are more likely to recognize you, or may have heard that you are going around talking to tenants, people may be more receptive and open to talking to you. That being said, depending on the situation, it may be best to recruit some tenants or representatives from popular community groups that represent the different networks and groups of people in the building. They can relate better to fellow tenants, know the best times to reach them, speak the same language, and may be more aware of any social or cultural sensitivities. Once you have the right team of people, it's time to go out into the neighbourhood and do some random information collecting.

Branching out in the neighbourhood

Reach tenants through public meetings

Meetings can be a great way to share what you've learned so far and get feedback from tenants in the neighbourhood. One way you can hold meetings is by going through the formal and service networks you already know tenants are part of. Maybe they can help you get tenants to attend a meeting or can set aside some time for you to talk at their next planned meeting. Another option would be to go through the contacts you have already made in the neighbourhood and ask them to help you organize tenants to attend a meeting.

Talk to tenants in groups

Now that you know where and when tenants gather informally, you know the best opportunities for approaching them in groups. These can simply be short discussions with groups that are hanging out in the lobby of the building or while they are picking their kids up from school.

Talk to tenants one-on-one

Ask some of the tenants you have already connected with to help you talk to tenants one-on-one. You can start off approaching people in informal common areas in the neighbourhood such as the downstairs lobby, laundry room, playground and other gathering places tenants may use through formal or service networks. Depending on the situation, you may also want to try going door-to-door.

Get tenants to fill in a short survey

Writing up a short survey is another way to get answers and comments from your neighbours. The two main ways to design the survey are to have the tenants read and write down the answers, or to do a survey where an interviewer asks the tenant questions and writes down the response word-for-word. Each type of survey has its own advantages and disadvantages, but it's important to choose a survey type that will work well in your neighbourhood. Our past experiences found that interview style surveys work best, since it offers more opportunity to have a discussion and build up a relationship with the tenant.

Talk to groups active in your neighbourhood

As discussed in the section about 'community connections', the various formal and service networks in the neighbourhood can shed a lot of light on the tenants who live in the building. If they do outreach work with tenants, they may be aware of certain groups or specific tenants that participate in their programs or use their services, or know where people gather. If they have had opportunities to talk with tenants regularly, they may be very aware of the different groups in the neighbourhood, the various personal stories, and the hot topics that tenants are talking about.



Resource Links

Statistics Canada – Census Tract (CT) Profiles, 2006 Census

Go to the 'Census' section of the website and look for the '2006 Census' subsection. Click on the 'Data Products' link to find the Census Tract (CT) Profiles in the 'Specialized Products' list. Explore statistical data of a neighbourhood's demographic by entering the postal code. This link is for the current (2006) census data, which is collected every five years.

Community Tool Box – National Park Service, Northeast Region Philadelphia Office

www.nps.gov/phso/rtcatoobox

Check out the 'Collecting Information Tools' section which explains how and why you would use certain methods to collect information in a neighbourhood such as focus groups, public surveys, community mapping exercises, inventories, and story telling.

Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement

www.tamarackcommunity.ca

Check out the Learning Centre, especially the sections on 'Community Engagement' and 'Community-based Strategies'.

Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO)

www.acto.ca

ACTO represents tenants in Ontario on a wide-range of issues including maintenance and supply issues. Check out the 'Tenant Info' section for tips and resources, such as the "Working with your Neighbours" tip sheet.

Ontario Tenants Rights

www.ontariotenants.ca

This website acts as a directory for tenants in Ontario. You can find city-specific information for tenants and more general information on tenant rights, organizing, and action.

Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations (FMTA)

www.torontotenants.org

Check out their 'Literature and Links' section for a number of resources including the "Tenant Organizing Manual", which has tips on how to organize tenant meetings and get the neighbourhood working together.



Uncovering the energy situation in the neighbourhood

Below are some suggestions of different ways you could get tenants involved to uncover possible energy problems and solutions. Most of these suggestions could work regardless of whether tenants pay for their utilities directly or not, but some will require the landlord's participation.

What's the building's energy situation?

Try this: Organize an energy tour of your building

Get a few neighbours together to hunt for energy wasters both inside and outside of the apartment building. While you are walking around, try to find situations where energy or hot water might be going to waste. Once you have a list of things that could be dealt with, share this list with all the tenants in the building. Maybe they can think of some things the energy tour missed? At minimum they will learn about some ways the apartment building is wasting energy for no good reason. Then you can put together a letter or talk to your landlord to draw attention to it. Especially if it saves the landlord money, they may be very interested in doing something about it.

Example: all the hallways on every floor of the building have lighting so you can see where you are going. Does the landlord use old-style light bulbs, or new energy saving ones such as compact fluorescents? What about in the lobby, in the laundry room, or parking garage?

Try this: Take a look at the building's energy bills

If tenants don't directly pay for power, they could approach the landlord and ask if they can see a record of how much energy the building uses. They can mention that they want to find ways to reduce how much energy is used, and would like to know what the average energy use and cost is per apartment unit. As it stands, their rent already includes the cost of these bills – they've just never seen them! The landlord may be able to tell you if the building uses more energy than another building its size, and why.

Try this: Learn more about the building's maintenance and repairs

Tenants could ask the landlord what the major issues are in the building that require ongoing maintenance and repairs. While we don't expect many landlords to willingly give out information on maintenance and repair costs, the superintendent may be willing to share what makes up the brunt of his/her work. It's possible that a lot of time and money spent on the building could be saved if the tenants and landlord resolve some of the energy-related issues.

What's the tenants' energy situation?

Try this: Bring a group of tenants together and compare energy costs

If tenants do pay their own energy bills, they may be curious how their costs compare to others in the building. If you are going to compare bills, there are a few things to keep in mind. First, you should look at the history of energy costs over at least a whole year, not just a month or two. You want to get a picture of how much it's costing people in different seasons. In the winter, your heat is one of the most expensive things you pay for. In the summer, it's probably the energy you use to cool down your unit (fan, air conditioner, etc.). Second, when comparing bills, make sure you are comparing the same month and think about the two main reasons why your bills could be different:

- *Sometimes it has to do with where your unit is located.* For example, do a lot of your windows face the cold north wind and get lots of shade, or do you your windows face the south and get lots of sunshine through them?
- *Sometimes it has to do with what you use and what you do.* For example, some families might use an air conditioner instead of a fan (which is cheaper to run), or they might use the kitchen and bathroom fans to get rid of warm air in the summer time.

Try this: Bring in an expert to assess a tenant's apartment

Try to get a professional to come in and do an evaluation of a tenant's apartment. Some groups have special rates for people who can't afford to pay the regular price, or may even offer their services for free. Once you know the results, you can share this information with the rest of the tenants in the building. The opportunities to save energy and make the unit more comfortable or safe may apply to others facing the same challenges.

Try this: Help tenants do an energy assessment in their own apartment

Whether you learn some techniques from an expert in energy assessments, or you run your own less complicated version, you can help people learn more about their energy use. Work with tenants to identify factors that are saving and draining energy. Keep in mind that an energy assessment is really only a snapshot of how much energy a tenant uses. If you do this assessment in the dead of winter in Ontario or the peak of a hot summer, you will get different results.

The best way to do an energy assessment is to make it interactive. Use a mix of different tools and approaches to collect energy use and conservation information while educating tenants at the same time. Here are some suggestions used in past programs:

- *Ask the tenant to do an energy questionnaire*
The questionnaire should be designed to reflect what you've already learned from tenants, but also have potential to uncover new energy issues you haven't considered.

Possible topics for the questionnaire might include tenants' level of comfort in their unit, awareness of energy use and savings, or what types of activities they currently do to make their unit more comfortable, safe, or to save money.

- *Take a tour of the apartment*

Depending on what season it is, you may want to walk around the main rooms with the tenant and point out certain things that are already saving energy, and areas where things could be improved.

Possible scenarios might be evidence that the windows are not in properly and are making the apartment drafty in the winter, or checking to see if they have and use stove and bathroom vents to pump out hot air.

- *Identify sources of power drain with a watt meter*

A watt meter is a hand-held instrument that can measure the electrical energy used by certain appliances, electronics, and anything else that plugs into the wall for power. It helps identify energy use in a way that connects it to things we use around the house and the associated costs.

- *Demonstrate the heat that comes off an old bulb with an Easy-Bake Oven®*

This classic children's toy bakes cookies using an incandescent light bulb. It's a great way to explain how much heat old bulbs emit, which in turn can cause the unit to be stuffy, overheated, etc. Take count of how many incandescent and energy saving bulbs are used in their apartment to help make the point.

- *Demonstrate the minimal difference in light 'quality'*

Sometimes people don't want to switch to compact fluorescent bulbs because of the perceived quality of the bulb. In recent years, the quality of the light it gives off has become comparable to incandescent bulbs, and other factors such a 'flickering' and 'buzzing' have improved. Place two identical lamps side by side and ask people to identify which one has the compact fluorescent bulb. Another simple way to demonstrate how heat comes off an old bulb is to have the tenant put their hand over top of the shades and compare.



Resource Links

Check out the official site for your City or call your local City Councillor. They may run some energy efficiency and/or conservation programs, including access to energy saving tips, rebates, education programs, workshops, etc.

Low-Income Energy Network (LIEN)

www.lowincomeenergy.ca

Check out the Background Information and Resource sections.

Association of Municipalities Ontario

www.amo.on.ca

- **'Sustainable Municipalities'**

This section includes an 'Environment' subsection with information on energy sources, use and conservation.

- **Local Authority Services Ltd. (LAS)**

www.amo.on.ca/las/

An AMO service website that has an Energy Services section. There are a number of resources here, including a ‘Toolbox’ subsection. While not all material will be relevant for tenants, check out the “Energy Savings Opportunities Guidebook” link.

Natural Resources Canada – Office of Energy Efficiency

<http://oee.nrcan.gc.ca/>

- **‘Contact an Energy Advisor’**

www.oee.nrcan.gc.ca/residential/personal/new-home-improvement/contact-advisors.cfm?attr=4

Provides a list of licensed NRCan energy advisors that you can search by postal code to find the ones offering services in your area. This subsection is found in the OEE Programs ‘Personal: Residential’ section.

- **OEE Publications**

“Low-income Energy Efficiency Program: Mapping the Sector and Program Design Principles”. A report prepared by the Toronto Environmental Alliance for the Ontario Power Authority’s Conservation Bureau, March 2006.

Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure – Information on Energy

www.energy.gov.on.ca

Go to the ‘Information on Energy’ section of the website. Explore the ‘Conservation’ subsection which offers energy calculators, energy saving tips, a ‘Heating and Cooling’ guide, program information and news updates.

Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation – CMHC for Housing Industry Professionals and Community Groups

www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/inpr/

- **Research Highlights**

This section has socio-economic and technical reports on a variety of issues, including energy use, safety, and sustainable development.

- **CMHC Research Reports**

– “Energy and Water Tune-Ups for Multi-Unit Residential Buildings” (Ref# 65893)

– “Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Urban Travel: Tool for Evaluating Neighbourhood Sustainability” (Ref# 62142)

Green Ontario – Conservation Solutions: A project of the Conservation Council of Ontario

www.greenontario.org/

- **CommunityACTION**

www.greenontario.org/caction/index.html

Offers an index of community network organizations, a community organizing manual, and updates on community action, events and projects throughout Ontario.

Government of Ontario

- **ecoACTION “Using less, living better”**

www.ecoaction.gc.ca/

- **Go Green Ontario**

www.gogreenontario.ca

Information on climate change, how it’s affecting Ontario, and what you can do.

Ontario Power Authority (OPA) – Conservation Section

www.powerauthority.on.ca

- **Conservation Bureau**

www.conservationbureau.on.ca

Provides general information on research, reports, and funding for electricity conservation initiatives.

Check out the report called “Realizing the Electricity Conservation Potential in Ontario’s Private Rental Housing Sector with Particular Attention to Low-income Households”, April 2006.

- **Every Kilowatt Counts**

www.everykilowattcounts.com

OPA’s resource page for programs, tools, tips, and rebates for conserving energy and becoming more energy efficient.

City of Toronto – 20/20 The Way to Clean Air

www.toronto.ca/health/airquality/2020/

This website offers resources, energy saving tips, and information on Toronto-based programs such as the Better Buildings Partnership.

Eneract

www.eneract.org/

Information about upcoming workshops, community projects, and resources on how to take action at both the household and neighbourhood level.

Wattwize

www.wattwize.ca/

An Ontario-wide school project presented by Citizens’ Environment Watch.

The Good Life – World Wildlife Fund

www.thegoodlife.wwf.ca/

Interactive website that helps individuals take action to reduce their environmental footprint, including energy conservation.

Ecological Footprint Quiz by Redefining Progress

www.myfootprint.org/

Interactive website that uses a quiz to raise awareness about how individual consumption (including energy use) contributes to your ecological footprint.

❖ Bouncing ideas off neighbours

Neighbourhood contacts

Since you have been talking to quite a few tenants already, you should know at least a few people with whom to share your draft strategy. Remember to cover all of the different groups of people that live in the building. These neighbourhood contacts may know a lot about the issues you are bringing up in the draft strategy, or they may just be really interested in the idea. Perhaps they have lived in the building for a long time and can tell you what will and won't work based on their past experiences. Encourage them to share how they feel about the draft strategy, including things they like or don't like about it, and ask them for suggestions of what they think people could do to fix the problem.

Focus groups

A focus group is like a neighbourhood meeting only it's comprised of a handful of people and is meant to address very specific goals. Select neighbours that represent all the different groups who comprise your neighbourhood. The structure of the meeting involves one person who leads the discussion and encourages the group to discuss the draft strategy in detail. You are not just trying to collect opinions on how people feel about the draft strategy but also their suggestions, ideas, and motivations that could make the strategy better.

The most important area to address is 'what the neighbourhood can do'. The focus group session will, among other things, test out all the possible energy saving actions outlined in your draft strategy.

When getting feedback from the participating tenants on this topic, there are a few things you want them to consider:

What do you think of the suggested actions for saving energy?

The tenants may be able to tell you which actions are too difficult, or point out ones already done or that they don't feel the need to do.

What will motivate tenants to take action?

If the energy saving action will improve safety, comfort, or save money, are tenants more willing to do it? If fellow tenants are encouraging them to take action, or if there is a neighbourhood goal or reward for participating, are they more likely to take part?

What will teach people how to take action?

What types of activities and tools can be used to teach people how to save energy and help them do it? For example, they may be interested in demonstrations, workshops, or one-on-one training with someone in their apartment.

What are the best ways to advertise the program and build interest?

What is most likely to catch a tenant's interest? Are there certain types of materials that people prefer such as newsletters, posters, or handouts? Do people like to hear about the program through activities and events such as meetings, information displays, give-away events, energy assessments? Would they prefer to hear about the program through word-of-mouth from fellow tenants or through formal or service networks?

When running a focus group, it can help to have sample materials and tools on hand to show tenants. For example, when talking about the best ways to teach people about energy conservation and what actions they could take, it might help to bring along tools such as a watt meter, a power bar, an Easy Bake Oven®, energy saving light bulb, etc. The same goes for examples of advertising materials.



Resource Links

Community Tool Box – National Park Service, Northeast Region Philadelphia Office

www.nps.gov/phso/rtcatoobox/

Check out the 'Collecting Information Tools', 'Gathering Tools' and 'Facilitation Tools' sections which offer some engaging ways to get feedback such as through focus groups, mapping exercises, meetings, charettes, active listening, dialogue, etc.

Environment Canada: Community Programs – Resource Materials

www.atl.ec.gc.ca/community/resources.html

This site includes information on developing a community project, fundraising, strategic planning, and more.

CLEOnet

www.cleonet.ca

This website provides information for community workers and tenant advocates working with low-income neighbourhoods. Check out the 'Resources' section, especially those found under the 'Housing Law' and 'Consumer Law' headings.

Look for the "Tenant Organizing Manual" prepared by Renters Educating & Networking Together (RENT).

Action for Neighbourhood Change

www.anccommunity.ca

• ANC Reports

- 'Community Capacity Building Planning Resources for Neighbourhood Renewal'
- 'A Guide for Neighbourhood Planning'

step
3

Info & Ideas

❖ **Creating a menu of energy saving options**

Here are some examples of energy saving menu options we used in the BEST and WiRE Programs:

- Turn off all the lights when I leave a room.
- Use compact fluorescent lightbulbs. They use 75% less energy than regular light bulbs, and put out less heat so your apartment won't be as stuffy.
- Unplug electronic devices and re-chargers when not in use, or shut them off with a power bar. Most of these continue to use energy even when switched off!
- Use curtains to keep the sun out on hot summer days and to keep the cold out during cold winter nights. Over half of home energy use in Toronto is for heating and cooling.
- Use cold water to wash my clothes. Hot water uses a lot of energy and doesn't get your laundry any cleaner. In fact, using hot water causes more wear and tear on your clothes.
- Plug the sink or rinse my dishes in a dishpan of clean rinse water instead of under hot running water. Five minutes of rinsing dishes under a faucet can use enough hot water to fill over 40 big pop bottles.
- Report leaky taps and toilets to the building Superintendent. One drip can waste over 180 litres of water per week – that's money down the drain.
- Use a fan to circulate cool air in summer and warm air in winter.
- Cook and re-heat food with smaller appliances instead of your stove.
- Let food cool down before putting it in the fridge or freezer.

❖ **Different types of advertising and communication**

Word-of-mouth

Probably the best form of communication you can offer in the neighbourhood is through your team members who act as messengers between the program and the tenants. They can use their various networks to inform lots of people in the neighbourhood about the program, or any upcoming activities or events with which to get involved. The team members can also encourage others to pass along the information to other people in the neighbourhood.

Printed media

While it may be the most common form of advertising, experience indicates it's not often as effective as expected. Depending on the feedback you've received from the tenants, you may want to limit how often you use these types of advertising and communication, and keep the messages short and to the point. If there is a notice board in the building that seems well used, this might be a good place to start. Check around to see if there are any popular community groups or service agencies that would be willing to advertise for you. Examples include hand-outs such as newsletters, flyers, and pamphlets, and larger items such as posters, banners, and notices you can post a bulletin board.

Keep in mind that some apartment buildings have rules around advertising inside the building. Before you put up any posters, or stick flyers in your neighbours' mailboxes or under their doors, be sure to talk to the superintendent. Keep on the good side of your superintendent as they are in charge of keeping the public areas of the building clean and safe.

Give-away items

More durable forms of printed media such as stickers, magnets, and calendars can be great give-away items where you can advertise energy saving tips, the program's contact information, or program goals. While more expensive to produce, they have proven to be an effective way to remind tenants about the program.

Activities and events

Often social gatherings are a great place to have fun, get to know one another and promote some of the program goals or key messages. It's a great opportunity to introduce the team members as the key 'go-to' people if tenants have questions. Examples might include meetings, information displays, give-away events, or a barbeque. These don't always have to be events that the team organizes themselves; you can sometimes 'piggy-back' on to other events that are going on in the neighbourhood already.



Tools and activities that help tenants learn about energy conservation

Learning by reading

Please refer to the list of advertising, communication materials and approaches listed above, as many of these can apply as educational materials on how energy conservation can benefit tenants. These might include:

- *Instructions* on how to do something that will save energy, such as installing and using a power bar properly, or using curtains to keep out the heat from the sun during hot days.
- *Energy tips* on things tenants can be reminded to do around the house, such as using energy saving light bulbs or taking out their air conditioner during the winter to avoid drafts.

- *Energy saving posters* can include energy saving tips and ‘did you know?’ facts about energy use. The posters should be strategically placed near the issue it addresses. For example, a poster promoting the use of cold water instead of hot water to wash clothing could be posted in the laundry room.

Learning by listening and watching

One of the best ways to help people to learn about energy conservation is to give interactive lessons, such as in a workshop or demonstration activity. For instance, you could hold a workshop on how to cool down your apartment in the summertime, or run a demonstration activity that identifies ways people waste energy, create heat, or generally make the unit less comfortable or safe.

There are certain types of tools you can use for educational activities, such as:

- A *watt meter* measures how much energy is used by almost any electronic device or appliance. This number value (kilowatt hours) can help explain the concept of energy use, and can also be converted into a dollar figure or expressed in terms of greenhouse gas emissions to demonstrate energy conservation’s financial or environmental costs.
- A *power bar* combined with a watt meter can help explain how the switch on the power bar can turn off the power supply to electronics that aren’t in use in order to cut down on stand-by power drain.
- An *Easy Bake Oven*® can demonstrate just how much heat a typical incandescent light bulb gives off (enough to bake some cookies!). This can be compared to a compact fluorescent bulb, which gives off much less heat.

Energy demonstrations can be designed to teach tenants about a number of things. They can be used for specific events or as an ongoing educational tool if there is a secure space to keep the demonstration running and the time for program representatives to run it.

These demonstrations are an interactive way to teach tenants about energy use by giving concrete examples of wasted energy culprits in their home, and offer solutions and tips that can save tenants money and help reduce energy use. Team leaders run the demonstrations, and are available to assist tenants in any way possible. This may include answering questions and offering resources, but they are specifically there to run the demonstrations, such as showing tenants how a watt-meter works, and showing evidence of ‘stand-by power’ sources in their homes.

The demonstration is designed to give tenants examples of energy use that are relevant to their lifestyle. Using actual appliances and electronic devices as examples, tenants are able to immediately relate to these sources of energy use. Examples of appliances and devices that were used in the WiRE Program’s Energy Demonstration include:

- Television
- DVD Player
- VCR Player
- Air conditioner

- Fan
- Microwave
- Hair dryer
- Adapters/Chargers (camera, cell phone, etc.)

Other potential examples that could be used but were unavailable at the time would include a complete 'home office' (computer monitor and hard drive and printer), air purifier, space heater, and night light.

Ways to conserve energy are taught by first demonstrating how these typical home appliances and devices could be wasting energy and costing them extra money or discomfort in their home (e.g. excess heat given off by incandescent bulbs). The following tools were used to explain energy use and conservation measures:

- Electronic watt-meter
- Power bar
- Digital thermometer
- Light bulb demonstration

Learning by doing

Once tenants have had some explanation and instruction on what they can do to save energy and how it can benefit them, they are ready to try it themselves. While some things may be done by the tenant on their own, some actions could use the help of a team member to get things started:

- *An energy assessment* could be carried out by the tenant with the help of a team member or two. They could identify the top priorities or first steps to start saving energy in their apartment. Get more information on energy assessments in the 'Step 1: Info & Ideas' section.
- *Free energy saving devices* given away to tenants by team members can help them get started without having to pay a penny. Some easy to use devices that could help save energy include power bars and energy saving light bulbs. Low-flow showerheads and aerators could help conserve water and the energy required to heat water. In our past programs, we included a number of devices, tips, and other materials into an 'Energy Kit' that was given out to all interested tenants.

step
4

Info & Ideas

❖ Training the Neighbourhood Action Team

Here are some helpful tips on designing and running training sessions:

Take it slow

Don't expect your team to take everything in at once. Break down the various types of training they will require into bite-sized pieces and spread it out over a few days or a full week.

Be interactive

Design material and activities that will engage and excite the team rather than feel like a lecture.

Make it team-oriented

Regardless of what the training topic is, it should always be a team effort. Find ways to draw attention to each team member's assets, skills and experiences to show that each person has something to offer. There should be ample time set aside for team mates to get to know each other better.

Encourage collective training

Design the workshops to reflect the fact that the team mates can learn just as much from each other as they can from the person running the session. Since training is ongoing, there will be multiple opportunities for team members to share some of their experiences or tricks in contributing to successful outreach efforts. Group activities and sharing skills will help bring the team closer together

❖ Resource Links

Public Interest Strategy and Communications

www.publicinterest.ca/

Check out their Tools and Resources section.

Community Tool Box – National Park Service, Northeast Region Philadelphia Office

www.nps.gov/phso/rtcatoobox/

Check out the 'Decision Making Tools' and 'Organization Tools' sections which offer some engaging ways to do consensus building, set priorities, and design work plans.

step
5

Info & Ideas

❖ Celebrating successes

Use tenant testimonials

Our past experiences show that testimonials are a great way to showcase positive feedback about the work done. Quoting what tenants have said about the activity or event helps give the program credibility and can encourage new tenants to get involved. It's important to always get permission from tenants before using their feedback to promote the program, as some people may feel uncomfortable with this idea.

Tell a success story

Write a short story about the event in a newsletter or tell different groups of tenants all about the success of the event through word-of-mouth. To strengthen the story, highlight the number of people who signed the energy pledge or how many energy saving devices you gave out.

Do a case study

A case study is an in-depth story about someone or a small group of people. For example, you could profile a tenant champion or some team leaders in a way that explains their energy conservation 'story' or how they came to be part of the Neighbourhood Action Team. This helps put a face and a name to program experiences and successes.

Organize a party or event

Social events can be a great reward for tenants who have been participating in the program, as well as a way to encourage more tenants to get involved or to reach a neighbourhood goal. During the BEST Program, tenant team members realized that a fun incentive to get families to commit to energy conservation was to organize a field trip for the children if they achieved their goals.

step
6

Info & Ideas

❖ **WiRE team feedback session**

Animators / Role in community

- How did you first hear about WiRE?
- How did you hear about the animator job?
- What were you hired to do?
- Do you think this approach worked (hiring people living at Walpole) and why?
- What didn't work well?
- Do you think your relationship with other residents has changed? How?
- For you personally, how did working on the WiRE Program affect you? Did you gain and/or lose anything by working on the program? (e.g. less time with kids, gained good skills for work, had a falling out with a tenant, etc.) Suggestions?
- Do you feel that you had enough training? Was there anything you wish you had more information on? Any suggestions?
- Were you ever worried about your safety or privacy while working on the project?
- Should the animator job be a paid position, or do you think some people would be willing to or prefer to volunteer?

Perspectives on program (personal)

- What were your favourite and least favourite activities during the program?
- What would you do differently if you could do it all over again?
- What questions were you asked the most? What comes to mind?
- A project just like this might get started in other neighbourhoods owned by TCHC in the future. What do you think about that? What do you think they need to do or consider before starting another program?
- If you could only list one thing, what do you think was the most successful thing we did to teach people about conserving energy (e.g. house visit, energy kit, workshops, community events, survey, etc.)?
- Coming into the program, were you confident that it would help tenants reduce energy use and/or save money? Has your opinion changed now that we are at the end of the program?

Tenant perspectives on program

- How do you think people felt at the beginning of the program, and how do you think they feel now?
- What do you think people liked the most about the program?
- What do you think people didn't like about the program?
- If you had to categorize the different types of people at Walpole based on their interest and actions in cutting down on energy use, how would you categorize them?

Sustainability

- Now that the project is finished, do you think residents will still ask you questions?
- What else can you see being done at Walpole to continue moving towards energy savings?
- If a project were to continue, what are things that you would want to address?
- Do you think people will continue to do things we gave advice on, or do you think they might need to be reminded?
- If yes, how would this be done?
- What role or responsibility do you think TCHC has for future energy saving programs at Walpole?
- What role or responsibility do you think my organization (TEA) has in future energy saving programs at Walpole?

Program structure

- What do you think about the role/job of the program coordinator?
- What are the things that make the difference between the coordinator doing a good or bad job?
- It took a while to find the right people to hire for your position. What do you think we should be looking for when we hire people from the neighbourhood?
- We had an empty unit to use during the project. How do you feel about this? Was it helpful to have it there to use? Why?
- How did you feel about the fact that the funding for the project came from TCHC?
- How did you feel about a non-profit environmental group running the program (TEA)?
- This program lasted about 4 months. Do you feel that was too short, too long, or just the right amount of time?