Multifamily Utility Benchmarking Webinar Series

Introduction to Multifamily Utility Benchmarking

and HUD's New Toolkit - April 13, 2017

Scott Ledford: (In progress) -- be successful in their multifamily utility benchmarking efforts. To cover some quick webinar logistics at the outset, note that there are two different boxes on your screen through which you can submit questions.

Please submit any technical issues you may encounter with the webinar technology to the chat box and to the host. Questions related to the content being discussed today should instead be submitted through the Q&A box and to all panelists. This will help get technical issues addressed during the webinar while we have some time set aside later in the webinar to answer questions related to the content.

At this time I'd like to introduce the host of this webinar, Julia Hustwit, who is with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and has some introductory remarks for us, Julia.

Julia Hustwit: Good morning and good afternoon everyone. I'm really pleased to be here with all of you and to see so many people joining us on this webinar. As Scott said, my name is Julia Hustwit and I've been coordinating efforts to promote utility benchmarking across HUD and its individual housing programs for the past year or two.

Now, utility benchmarking is something that may seem new, but it's actually something that HUD has been looking at and in trying to figure out how to do since 2003. It's something that we internally have felt is very important, and that experts internally and externally have recommended strongly to us, including the government accountability office.

Utility benchmarking is really the most powerful tool we have to track energy and water consumption in multifamily buildings. It's the first crucial step in reducing wasteful spending on utility bills. So the tenants, property owners, and tax payers can spend their limited funds more wisely.

We've designed this tool kit that Scott and Blakely are going to be walking you through to be very robust. Now it includes a great deal of information. Not all of you will need all of that information, but we wanted to make sure that we provide as much as possible to cover as many different possible scenarios that you might encounter along your way.

It is complete with information on how to lay out a utility benchmarking plan, to collect and share utility data, and to find opportunities to fund improvements to your buildings and continue to build on the success that you have with utility benchmarking.

We've also made the toolkit as flexible as possible as tools and resources for multifamily property owners that can apply to just one building or to an entire portfolio of properties spanning millions of square feet. It really is meant to accommodate even our tiniest portfolios all the way up to the New York City Housing Authority is our largest and most complex portfolio in the country. So hopefully this toolkit will provide something for everyone. The information in our toolkit and our webinar series is straightforward and practical.

We hope that you'll take a moment to access it, take a look at it through our webinar series and on the Internet, and then use the parts that are appropriate for your purposes and are appropriate to your portfolio. And we're going to be, as you know, having six webinars. We've stretched the information out pretty broadly, not to intimidate you about how much content there is. It really just to give you more than enough, more than you could really need to know so that you feel prepared to do utility benchmarking.

And with that, I'm going to hand the mic back over to Scott who's going to start telling up about the toolkit.

Scott Ledford: Thank you very much, Julia. My name is Scott Ledford, and I'm a principal with ICF. My colleague, Blakely Jarrett, is also joining us as a presenter today.

As you may already be aware, today's webinar is the first in a six-part series that has been designed this way to spread the content across short sessions which require less of your time in any one day or week.

We do encourage you to participate in all of the sessions as the content is different and cumulative, and there will be times as you will hear today where we mention that a topic will be covered in more detail in another webinar. If you miss a session, though, an archive of each session is also going to be made available through the utility benchmarking page on the HUD Exchange website.

Our objectives in this session are to introduce you to the benefits of utility benchmarking, including some of the reasons you may want or need to do utility benchmarking, and how your organization can get started with utility benchmarking, including resources that are currently available. Blakely will also give you a guided tour of the newly available Multifamily Utility Benchmarking toolkit, and we'll point out the upcoming webinars which will address some specific topics that may be of interest to you.

Overall, keep in mind that this first webinar is intended to be a broad overview, whereas later webinars will dive deeper into specific details, methods, and tools. Speaking of overviews, let's now get into the basics of what utility benchmarking actually is.

At its essence, utility benchmarking is about tracking, analyzing, and reporting the energy and water consumption and cost for property or portfolio of properties. Whether you are interested in benchmarking a single property or you have your sights set on a portfolio of dozens or hundreds of properties, the active utility benchmarking allows you to assess the energy and water

performance of each property, evaluate that performance over time, and even compare properties to one another.

Understanding a property's energy and water consumption and cost is a very basic and fundamental asset management practice. That is likely already in place for many multifamily housing providers, especially in light of the capital investments and operating budgets inherent in this housing stock.

I'm sure you've all heard the familiar phrase shown on this slide, "You can't manage what you can't measure." Utility benchmarking is about doing the measuring so you can manage the utility consumption and cost. The benefits of measuring and actively managing utility consumption and cost accrue to the many parties identified here, first and foremost to the owners and tenants of the housing itself.

There are many ways the insights gained through utility benchmarking can be put to work, some of which are listed here. Also note that just the active benchmarking a property can help housing providers identify surprises of which they may not have been previously aware, such as billing errors, equipment malfunctions, and/or building systems that aren't operating as designed. Identifying and addressing situations like these could result in very quick wins and financial savings.

Of course the active utility benchmarking itself is not what creates the energy in water savings, but the information gathered and insights gained through utility benchmarking provide a basis for targeted actions and next steps that can lead to the energy and water savings. Those steps may include low or no cost operations and maintenance or behavioral measures, or more comprehensive capital investments.

I'll also point out the last two bulleted items on this slide, which speak to applying what you can learn from the utility benchmarking of your properties to help with first prioritizing investments and then assessing the actual effectiveness of those investments. Utility benchmarking helps you to do both as you are gathering and tracking data over time, which means you can establish a baseline before investment decisions are made and assess the outcomes after investments are put into service.

This screen summarizes some benefits of utility benchmarking which can accrue at the property or portfolio level. So imagine we're zoomed into the little picture here. Again the active benchmarking doesn't create these benefits in and of itself. It's the information and insights generated through utility benchmarking which can position multifamily housing providers to take actions that produce these outcomes. The graph on this slide is taken from the EPAs analysis of more than 35,000 buildings that benchmarked an ENERGY STAR portfolio manager consistently over a period of four years.

On average, those properties experienced energy reductions of more than 7 percent with corresponding average increases of 6 points in their ENERGY STAR Score. We'll talk more about ENERGY STAR portfolio manager and ENERGY STAR scores in a minute. But these

statistics provide empirical support for the notion that properties that engage in benchmarking are likely to see meaningful savings.

Zooming out to the bigger picture now, other studies by the Department of Energy and McKinsey and Company demonstrates a potential energy savings, which can be found in buildings overall. And you can see here some of the other bigger picture benefits that can result from undertaking utility benchmarking at your individual properties.

The map on this slide is from buildingreading.org and illustrates the growing number of state and local jurisdictions that are requiring utility benchmarking and disclosure of energy and water performance. You can find a link to this website and map within the new toolkit that Blakely will show us. Other drivers of utility benchmarking include utility providers themselves who may require it as part of participation in their incentive programs. And the widespread recognition that utility benchmarking is both a best practice and a way to reduce wasting money and natural resources.

HUD has some existing voluntary initiatives which already require utility benchmarking as part of participation, mainly the Better Buildings Challenge and the Green MIP Reduction. Public notices have also been put out for comment, which serves as proposed requirements until a final decision is made by HUD. Webinar 6 in this series will cover those in more detail, but you can find more information about them within the toolkit at any time. In the meantime, utility benchmarking is being strongly encouraged for all multifamily properties. And HUD wanted to provide the new toolkit in these webinars now to help multifamily housing providers do it successfully.

So there's a high level overview of what utility benchmarking is and why it's relevant. Now let's get into how your organization can start to think about and be prepared to undertake utility benchmarking. The good news is you've already taken the first step by attending this webinar and/or listening to it in the future.

The next steps you can take are registering for and participating in all of the webinars in this series, and beginning to review the new Multifamily Utility Benchmarking toolkit, which HUD released this week. This webinar series will go over specific guidance included in the toolkit and highlight many resources included within it. But you are also encouraged to take a look in advance at the new toolkit to help build your knowledge of what will be covered. And you may even come up with some questions you would like to bring to future webinars.

As you will see, a good portion of the toolkit's content is organized and dedicated to the six major steps summarized here. Preparing a thoughtful approach to how your organization will undertake its utility benchmarking efforts, will pay dividends when you get to the point of actually using benchmarking software and entering the data you have collected. For now, it's useful to recognize that there are several steps and the next webinar will go into more specific detail about the various approaches your organization may choose to take toward utility benchmarking.

It's also useful to take stock at this point of the resources you have available within your organization, vis-à-vis, those that will be needed in those six steps. Might your organization be able to complete the steps within house staff, maybe some help from summer interns can help you get farther faster. Another option could be to contract with third party consultants or service providers. Webinar 6 will address ways in which HUD funding and/or technical assistance may be able to assist you with your utility benchmarking efforts. But first you need to put together the picture of what your needs may be.

As I mention at the outset, utility benchmarking is about tracking, analyzing, and reporting the energy and water consumption and cost for a property or a portfolio of properties. So you'll also need to put together the picture of your portfolio of properties. For smaller organizations the number of properties, buildings, and meters could be quite simple. For organizations with many properties, it can naturally become a bit more complex. A key here is tracking down information that more than likely already exists somewhere within your organization. And organizing it in a manner that supports your utility benchmarking efforts for each property. Your organization might even already have HUD-52722 submissions and Utility Allowance Schedules that are directly relevant to the utility benchmarking of those properties.

The next webinar and the online toolkit will go further into ways you can gather and maintain the information necessary for utility benchmarking. And we'll show you a new HUD tool designed to help you organize and keep track of it all.

Another additional activity that can help you get started with utility benchmarking is introducing yourself to ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager. This is a free Web-based software tool for utility benchmarking that is currently being used by more than 450,000 properties across the country. Portfolio Manager can be used by any property to measure and track the energy and water use intensity and calculate a range of performance metrics. You can start becoming familiar with Portfolio Manager from within HUDs new toolkit by going to the benchmarking 101 section and the "What is Portfolio Manager?" topic.

Links to general information FAQs about Portfolio Manager can be found there while other sections of the new toolkit provide more detailed information geared specifically to the use of Portfolio Manager for multifamily properties. A brief note about vocabulary may be useful at this point as well. A lot of the existing materials and guidance about ENERGY STAR and Portfolio Manager refer to buildings as a primary unit of measure or analysis, which makes sense when you consider the range of possible users from industrial complexes to universities and office towers. We'll talk more about why in the next webinar, but keep in mind if you start reading beforehand that you may want to substitute the word property for building as your primary unit of measure or analysis.

Portfolio Manager is also the tool through which ENERGY STAR 1-100 scores become available. Multifamily properties with 20 or more units can receive a score, which is a way to compare properties to one another. A property that scores 75 or above is eligible for ENERGY STAR certification, which recognizes top performers throughout the country. Note also that many third-parties, including utility and management service providers and utility providers

themselves are able to send data directly to Portfolio Manager on behalf of property owners, which may another pathway available to help facilitate utility benchmarking at your properties.

You can access extensive training resources for Portfolio Manager through the URL at the bottom of this page, which is also provided within the online toolkit. And since I mentioned, and yet again, it's about time for Blakely to give you that guided tour of the newly available toolkit. Blakely, please take it away.

Blakely Jarrett: Thank you, Scott, and good afternoon and good morning. You should be able to view my screen by now. As Scott mentioned, my name is Blakely Jarrett, and I'm a Senior Associate of ICF. I'm very excited to be here today to give you a brief walkthrough of the toolkit itself, which was just published this week. I want to emphasize before I begin that this is going to be a walkthrough of the toolkit, of its components and of some of the functionality. But I'm not really going to get much into the content. So as Scott and Julia have mentioned several times, we have five upcoming webinars which we'll really dive deep into several parts of the content of the toolkit, but today will just be an overview of the structure itself.

So we'll start our tour by navigating to the Utility Benchmarking's landing page on HUD Exchange. So for those of you who are unfamiliar with the HUD Exchange, this is the front page. And if we wanted to navigate to the toolkit that we're talking about today, you can click on the magnifying glass at the top right, and then just search for utility benchmarking, which you'll see I have saved in here. And then click the first search result that appears and it takes you to the utility benchmarking landing page. And by the way, if you didn't want to go to the HUD Exchange first, you could also use your favorite search engine, and if you search for HUD utility benchmarking, this landing page should come up as your first result. So the landing page includes a brief description of utility benchmarking at the top, and then it includes a link to the multifamily utility benchmarking toolkit right in the center of the page. Before we go to the toolkit I also wanted to highlight for you there's an events and trainings box on the right-hand side. And we use this box to post upcoming webinars. So for example if you wanted to register for these webinars we've been referring to, you can click on this link right here. But we also post past webinars here, so that if you wanted to view the slides or listen to the recording, you could access them here.

At the bottom of the page is a "News and Announcements" page. That news and announcement section where there are various blog post and Listservs related to utility benchmarking. You can check this section frequently for updates. So to move onto to the toolkit, I'll click "View the toolkit" in the middle of the screen. The first thing you'll notice is that the toolkit is split into three sections, Benchmarking 101, Utility Benchmarking Step-by-Step, and Policies and Programs. For a brief description of each section you can click "What's in this toolkit?" at the top. In addition to these one sentence descriptions of each of the sections, we'll soon have a button here that will allow you to download a PDF containing the full content of the toolkit.

So to go back to the toolkit itself, this is the front page, and again, it's split into three sections. I'll start with Benchmarking 101. I open it by clicking "View Guide". And you'll see that each section lists subtopics in the horizontal green bar across the top of the screen. You can scroll through the entire section or click one of the subheadings at any time to skip to that part of the

text. So for example, I can scroll through these initials paragraphs that define utility benchmarking. I then click "What are the benefits?" to jump ahead and read more about the benefits of utility benchmarking. I can flip back to previous subtopics or move forward to subsequent topics at any time. Each subtopic is defined by a horizontal graphic and a title.

One navigation feature I really like is the "Table of Contents" tab on the right-hand side of the screen. When you open up this tab there's a link to the home page at the top, which takes you back to that first page with the three sections. The rest of the tab is divided into the three sections with the subtopics listed below. If I were reading about the benefits of utility benchmarking in the toolkit page, and I wanted to learn more about the financial assistance available to me I could open up the "Table of Contents", click on "Financial Assistance for Utility Benchmarking", and it would open up in a new tab.

When I'm finished reading about financial assistance, I can close this tab and I'm back where I started. Within the toolkit you'll find links to external resources embedded within the text. So for example, here's a link to HUDs existing and proposed utility benchmarking requirements. You'll also find grey boxes throughout, which are titled, "Related Resources". These grey boxes appear throughout the toolkit, and they're visually lined with the text that they supplement. So in this case the grey box to the right-hand side, if you were reading about the benefits of utility benchmarking and you wanted to explore statistics or research to further support the text you've just read, you could start with these links and related resources.

The remaining two subtopics on this page include an introduction to Portfolio Manager and also a series of case studies that demonstrate how leading multifamily housing providers have successfully used utility benchmarking to implement a wide range of energy and water efficiency projects. To return to the home page I click on the first subtopic of this section, and then click the dark blue "Multifamily Utility Benchmarking toolkit" link.

Now I'll walk you briefly through the second section titled, "Utility Benchmarking Step-by-Step". This includes the most detailed information of the three sections, which can really help you begin the process. Because this section describes a step-by-step process, we strongly encourage users to read the information sequentially the first time as the information builds on itself from subtopic to subtopic. In other words, if you're unfamiliar with the utility benchmarking process, you should probably review steps one through five before jumping to step six. Once you're familiar with the utility benchmarking process, you can jump to any of the steps using the horizontal green bar at the top of the screen.

One really useful aspect of the toolkit is that it links users to multiple external resources related to utility benchmarking. In some cases the links direct you to HUD Exchange landing pages where you can download tools to support your utility benchmarking efforts. For example, HUD has developed a Multifamily Utility Benchmarking Plan Template. And if you click a link, it takes you to a landing page for this resource. You can read a description of the resource and download it for your own use using the link at the bottom. We'll discuss how to use this resource an others on upcoming webinars.

Going back to the toolkit, I'd like to highlight the grey callout boxes throughout the page with resources, tips, and notes. Some of the callout boxes are directed at specific types of housing authorities. So for example, this one that you see below is geared specifically toward public housing authorities.

There's a second external resource in this section that I'd also like to point out. Similar to the benchmarking template that we reviewed earlier, the link directs you to a landing page on the HUD Exchange. The Multifamily Utility Data Collection Database, it's a single repository of the requirements of benchmarking programs and the procedures utility providers require owners to follow to access tenant data. So again, you can see a description of this resource, guidance on how to download it, and a link at the bottom for you to download this resource for your own use.

Moving back to the benchmarking process, I'd like to briefly highlight step two, which is collecting utility data. I want to point out that there's a second link to the utility provider database we just reviewed. That link is here. And I'm pointing it out because resources are oftentimes linked in more than one place within the toolkit to help you find them. You'll see that this section explains several suggested methods for utility benchmarking. There's Method A: Properties with Owner-Paid Utility Bills; Method B: Aggregated Whole-Property Utility Data; Method C: Collection of Tenant-Paid Utility Data; and Method D: Collection of the Sample of Tenant-Paid Utility Data.

Be on the lookout for grey boxes that provide tips for each of these methods. So in this case if we scroll down, there's a grey box with specific tips for Method B: Collecting Aggregated Whole-Building Data. Just below the grey box I'd like to highlight a final external resource that can support your utility benchmarking process. The tenant paid utility data sampling calculator helps property owners create an appropriate sample set for utility benchmarking and utility allowance schedules. Again you can view a description of this resource, and you can download it here for your own use. We'll review this resource and the others in-depth on our upcoming webinars.

Finally this page includes a list of common FAQs. For each of the FAQs, as you click the box, an answer will drop down and appear below. By the way, there's several of these drop-down boxes throughout the toolkit, so be on the lookout for similar boxes with plus signs. If you click them, more information will drop down. To navigate back to the home screen, I'll click again on the first subtopic of this section, which is Step one, and then click "Multifamily Utility Benchmarking toolkit".

The final section of the toolkit covers HUDs policies and programs. Similar to the first section the topics are standalone, so it's not critical that you read the sections all at once or sequentially. The first section details HUDs Utility Benchmarking Requirements, and includes a summary table that displays the requirements as they apply to various HUD programs. Importantly, the second subtopic introduces multiple opportunities for financial and/or technical assistance from HUD to support utility benchmarking activities. One of these is the Green Mortgage Insurance Premium Reduction Program.

You can see a basic overview of the voluntary incentive program and an explanation of the financial and technical assistance available. There's a grey box to the right with more information. Each of these opportunities has a grey box that will soon include links to one page summary program flyers. This section concludes with HUD programs that support multifamily property owners throughout the utility benchmarking process. Note that the more – there's a "More information" box to the right of each of these programs as well, which includes resources and will soon include one page summary flyers.

This concludes our tour of HUDs Multifamily Utility Benchmarking toolkit. As I mentioned at the start of this presentation, there are five upcoming webinars that will dive much deeper into the content of each of these sections. We suggest that you review the toolkit on your own time before you leave the webinars so you can come prepared with questions. Now I'll pass the presentation back to Scott who will review the webinar schedule and registration information.

Scott Ledford: Thank you very much, Blakely. Now that you know where and how to dig into the new toolkit, let's talk about what's happening next. The next webinar is next Thursday at the same time. And each webinar thereafter magically follows the same day and time schedule. The Better Building Summit – there it is. The Better Buildings Summit is taking place in Washington, D.C. the week of May 15th, so there will be a short break before the final webinar takes place on June 1st, which is another Thursday at the same time again.

As I mentioned a few times today, Webinar 2 is going to dive deeper into planning for utility benchmarking and organizing and managing your data towards this end. It will include a demonstration of the new Multifamily Utility Benchmarking template, which is an entirely optional tool being made available by HUD to assist housing providers in the utility benchmarking efforts. As Blakely showed, it is available for download now from the new toolkit, and next week we will demonstrate it for you. Webinar 3 will then get into details about collecting the data necessary for utility benchmarking in multifamily properties specifically during which we'll also demonstrate another newly available optional tool, the tenant pay utility data sampling calculator that Blakely referenced.

Again this is also currently available for download from the new toolkit. Webinar 4 on May 4th will focus on using Portfolio Manager and entering the data that will have been collected. I'll even throw in an advanced hint here that the optional tools we've been mentioning are designed to help make this more seamless. On May 11th, Webinar 5 will show you how you can share the results of your utility benchmarking efforts with other entities through Portfolio Manager and highlight actionable ways you can use those results to benefit your organization and improve the performance of your properties.

After the short hiatus around the Better Buildings Summit, we'll come back together on June 1st for Webinar 6, which we'll discuss HUD benchmarking requirements, financial assistance possibilities, and green retrofit opportunities.

If you haven't already, be sure to register for the remaining webinars through the Utility Benchmarking Website on the HUD Exchange. And let your friends, colleagues, and competitors who weren't able to attend this session know about them as well. As we progress

through the webinar series, past webinars will also become available under the archive section of "Events and Training".

At this time we'll turn to the questions that may have come in and give you a moment to submit any questions you may have. Blakely, do we have a first question?

Blakely Jarrett: We do. We have the question that has – we have a question that's come in for Julia, which is, what do you do in cases where the utility company refuses to provide data without a court order despite having tenant releases?

Julia Hustwit: Thank you, guys. This is a great question. I believe that this situation will be extremely rare, so let's state that first of all. But it sounds like you're confronting this issue. What I'd encourage you to do, Ashley [ph], is to reach out to us here at HUD. And I believe you – I'm checking – you're with Community Housing Partners, so I believe you're apart of the Better Buildings Challenge. They may also even reach out to your account manager to help with this issue. But we have been doing some outreach to utility providers across the country as have a lot of other federal agencies and non-profit organizations on the issue of tenant data access and aggregated whole building data access.

So we may be able to set up a meeting with you and your utility provider to talk through the issues and [inaudible] that data for you. So I would ask you if you do come, or if anyone else comes into an anomalous situation like this to reach out to us and we will do what we can to support you and make sure that that data is released for the purposes of benchmarking.

Blakely Jarrett: Thank you, Julia. I think we've had one more question come through that's for you. And that's inquiring if there are any updates on the 60-day notice [inaudible] in October 2015 of proposed information collection regarding energy benchmarking?

Julia Hustwit: Yes. I'm not surprised to get this question. So what we are doing right now is we have prepared our responses to the public comments that we received on the PRA Notice, which is the 60-day notice that we issued in October. And we're getting ready to release those comments soon, although as you know been through an administration change recently, so there's timing issues around all of that. One of the reasons that we put Webinar 6, which it covers the issues of the current requirements and proposed requirements just so we have a little bit more time to work out those issues and figure out timing and what the policies will look like going forward. So please do return and join us for that webinar when we should have some more information about exactly what the future holds.

Blakely Jarrett: Thank you. We've gotten one more question for Scott, which is how will we know when these webinar slides are available?

Scott Ledford: So if you received the notification about the webinar in your e-mail, if you're a member of one of the Listservs through the HUD Exchange. When you receive subsequent announcements, it will indicate next to each webinar that are recording or the resources are now available. So if you have already signed up for one of the Listservs through HUD Exchange then you will know when they become available. Otherwise you are welcomed to check at any time.

you can go to that Utility Benchmarking landing page that Blakely showed you and click on "Events and Training", and in the archives section you'll be able to see the recordings and there'll be copies of the slides as well.

Blakely Jarrett: Great. Thank you. And – okay. So we have one more question that's come in, and says, our domestic hot water heaters are rented through the local utility. Most of them are more than 20 years old and the utility is dragging its feet on replacing them. Is there a point person at HUD who I can contact to act a liaison with the utility?

Julia Hustwit: This is a great question. And the answer actually depends, Robert [ph], on which program you're involved in with HUD. I don't know if we're able to let Robert tell me the answer to that, or if he can write into the chat box here. But I would suggest that you contact your field office representative at your local HUD field office.

So if you're in the public housing program, or if you're in our assisted housing program for instance, you should have a representative there at the field office. And you can pose this question to them. They may be able to help you. If they're not feeling comfortable with helping out on this issue because they're unfamiliar with issues of Green Building, for instance, then feel free to contact us at headquarters and we'll see what we can do about connecting you with some – with a professional who can help out with this type of issue.

And also I would add, making sure that you're aware of programs and opportunities that we have to help you work on issues of replacements and upgrades through your HUD program as well.

Blakely Jarrett: Thank you, Julia. We've had one more come in, which is, is this toolkit solely for HUD properties, or is it available for private properties?

Scott Ledford: Julia, I think either one of us could tackle that one. Do you want to do it?

Julia Hustwit: Sure. Sure. I'm happy to. So we wrote this toolkit with the hopes that it would be useful to any property owner of multifamily buildings in the country. It does include a lot of HUD specific information, many, many references to HUD programs and other reporting activities that our constituents are involved in and that align with utility benchmarking. But so long as you can gloss past that, this toolkit should be useful to multifamily building owners of all types.

Blakely Jarrett: Okay. I'm just – I'm scrolling through some of the other ones that have trickled in. How will this utility benchmarking interface with energy consumption models?

Julia Hustwit: To answer that question I think I need a little bit more detail from Larry [ph] about what energy consumption models he is referring to. If it's, for instance, some modeling that he's done through like a virtual energy audit, or if it's something that he has been modeling for an energy performance contract.

But I guess I could speak broadly to how utility benchmarking data is used and what it's beneficial for. It does track your actual energy and water usage, and it rates you in relationship

to other properties of your type in the country. It's based on a linear regression model, so while they are no two identical properties in the country, there's a formal that EPA develops to approximate what your building or your property should be consuming based on its characteristics, and how it is consuming in comparison to that.

There are also many, many other metrics that you can get access to through Portfolio Manager, like your energy use intensity, your water use intensity, which are your BTUs per square foot or your gallons per square foot. So those pieces of information are really, really beneficial for setting baselines if you're doing an energy or water upgrade project.

And for understanding how any investments into improving your energy and water efficiency are paying back to you, so are they effective? Are you seeing your energy and water efficient increase? Are you seeing your costs go down because you do – and are able to track costs in Portfolio Manager? And we ask that you do that because it's useful information. So while you could use the information that you're putting into utility benchmarking – into Portfolio Manager to do estimates of your future energy and water usage, that would be something that you'd be doing kind of in addition to what the software does. I hope that answers the question.

Blakely Jarrett: So we have a question that's come in that's more sort of about the fundamentals of utility benchmarking, and so I'll pose it to both of you, which is, to establish a baseline, how far back should my utility data be?

Julia Hustwit: That really depends on what you're going for. So if you're entering into an energy or water efficiency project, an energy performance contract, or a Green Retrofit, whatever the nature of your projects, it's really important to set a baseline so that you can tell what the effects your improvement have been. And the way you set up a baseline, if you choose a date, or average a few years even, before you start the project so that you can get a before and after. But there's no hard and fast rule on exactly when that baseline should be, but it should be recent so that you're not using out-of-date information, but it should be before you begin your project.

Blakely Jarrett: Thank you, Julia. I'm not seeing any more questions right now, but we can wait another couple seconds if you want to see if they come in.

Julia Hustwit: There is a question here about rural development that I'd love to take. So obviously I can't speak for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, but I know there's a lot of overlap between HUDs programs and USDA's Rural Development Program. We work closely with them. I don't know and can't say if they will follow suit with any kind of requirements. I know that they do encourage that their constituents do benchmarking. They hope that folks will do it. And we did, when we wrote the toolkit, tried to write it in a way that would be beneficial to anyone who's in the rural development program as well.

We didn't speak in great detail to the rural development again because it isn't our program, but the tools – you'll see when we start to go through some of the spreadsheet tools that we did list space for you to put in your USDA Rural Development property numbers and things like that in case you're part of that program. So hopefully this toolkit and the tools that we built are also useful for you, if you're in that program.

Blakely Jarrett: Thank you, Julia. So I think that wraps up our Q&A period. Scott, do you have any final thoughts?

Scott Ledford: Sure. Thanks, Blakely. So to wrap us up today, I'll just offer this slide as a quick summary of several of the resources that are related to the material we've covered today.

Note that all of these are linked to from within the new toolkit. So using the top item, you can also get access to all of the others. Also would like to share our contact information, if the slide would advance.

So here you have contact information for all three of us. And we'd like to thank you for joining us for this webinar today, and look forward to sharing more with you next week. Thank you again.

(END)