

Multifamily Utility Benchmarking Webinar Series

Sharing Multifamily Utility Benchmarking Results and Building on Success

May 11, 2017

Scott Ledford: Welcome to the fifth webinar and HUD's multifamily utility benchmarking webinar series. In this webinar we're going to talk about sharing multifamily utility benchmarking results and building on success.

The logistics for this webinar remain the same. Please submit any technical issues with the webinar technology through the chat box and to the host, as well as any questions related to the content of today's webinar should instead be submitted through the Q&A box and to all panelists. Individual technical issues will be addressed throughout the webinar, while we have set aside some time later in the webinar to address questions related to the content.

Julia Hustwit with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is again our host for this webinar. I'm still Scott Ledford with ICF and Andrew Schulte is joining us as a presenter again today.

Now, that we're onto the fifth session in this webinar series, a lot of content has been covered in the previous webinars. As the content of each webinar is different and cumulative, we encourage you to separately review the recordings, transcripts, and/or copies of the slide decks for the previous webinars if you are not able to join on those days. These are all posted under the events and training section of the utility benchmarking page on the HUD Exchange. Of course we'll continue to point out today when some items have been covered previously or will be covered in the future.

In today's webinar we'll show you how and why to use the data quality checker in Portfolio Manager, as well as how to both share benchmarking results with internal audiences and report benchmarking results to external audiences. We'll also show you how you will be able to access, fill out, and submit HUD's customized utility benchmarking reporting template.

We'll then turn our attention to how utility benchmarking results can be translated into concrete actions toward improving the performance of properties and portfolios. Starting at the top of this list I'm going to first pass the baton to Andrew to get right into reviewing data quality. Andrew, please take it away.

Andrew Schulte: All right. Well, thanks very much, Scott, and hello again to everyone on the line.

So in last week's webinar we learned about getting data into the Energy Star Portfolio Manager tool to perform utility benchmarking. I'd like to begin today by discussing a few features within

Portfolio Manager that can help you to review the data quality of your benchmarking information once it's been entered.

So to begin why should we be concerned with reviewing data quality? Well, for one thing, the information that you can obtain from utility benchmarking is only as good as the data you enter into Portfolio Manager. Faulty or incorrect data going into the tool will result in inaccurate results, which will make it more difficult for you to develop clear and actionable next steps based on benchmarking.

A bit later in this webinar we'll be talking about options for sharing and reporting your utility benchmarking data with other parties including HUD. Before you share or report your data, however, you need to make sure that it is as accurate as possible. If your data are incomplete when you report or if there are errors that you have not corrected, then it's more likely that you'll need to resubmit. By taking the time to review on the front end you can cut down on additional work down the line.

Over the next few minutes we're going to walk through a few different features in Portfolio Manager that can help you to identify if there are potential issues with your data and if so how to fix them. So to do this, let's go live to the Web and I will show you these features in Portfolio Manager in real time. So I'll just give a few seconds to make sure that my screen is loading up on your viewers and you should be seeing the summary tab for a demonstration property in Portfolio Manager.

All right. So the first way for you to tell if your data may be incomplete is to check and see if any of the metrics being calculated by Portfolio Manager are showing up as not available. Whenever this is the case you can actually go ahead and click on the words not available to receive a detailed explanation of the cause as well as what you need to do to resolve it.

Now, in some cases there might not be anything for you to fix because a particular metric is not available for your particular property type. If this is the case, then don't worry. So for instance, here on this screen you'll see that my total waste disposed and diverted is showing as not available, and if I click on that link it says because I don't have waste meters set up. Well, that's expected because I'm not tracking waste at this property so I'm not going to worry about that. However, what I am looking at here is the fact that I'm receiving a "not available" alert both for my Energy Star score and my energy use intensity for the period ending December 2016 this column right here.

Now, these are key metrics that you're looking to get out of the benchmarking process and they should be calculating correctly. So what I'm going to go ahead and do is I'm going to click on the link right here where it says "not available" and a dialog box is going to pop up that tells me that I don't have 12 complete months of data for a specific meter -- in this case, the owner-paid electricity meter.

If I go ahead and I click through on the meter it'll take me directly to the meter record for this property and I can see immediately what it was telling me. It was telling me that I did not have complete energy data for the period ending December 31st 2016. And in fact, I can see that this

is correct. My data only goes through October 2016. So if I want to be able to get metrics for the 12-month period ending December 2016, I'm going to have to come in and add two more months of energy data. And once I do that the metrics can be generated and displayed.

All right. So that's option one for checking your data quality. The next way that Portfolio Manager helps you to identify data issues is with alert icons, and these are red exclamation points that will display on the details, the energy, and the water caps. They're going to point you to the most critical data problems.

In this case I see an alert icon on my water data tab, so I'm going to click on that; and then as I scroll down through the page I see that there is in fact a corresponding alert icon here next to my owner-paid water meter. So if I click on the alert icon itself, again I will get a dialog box, and it's going to tell me that there is a gap in my meter entries. Essentially, Portfolio Manager can't see 12 consecutive complete months of data.

So if I wanted to fix that I would drill down into this particular meter, I would expand the meter entry tab, and right there you'll see that there's a yellow bar that indicates exactly where the gap has occurred. You'll see that my November meter ends on 11/30 but my December meter doesn't pick up again until 12/3. So that's the gap that Portfolio Manager is identifying and that I will need to close in order for the tool to be able to see 12 consecutive months of data. In this case it would be as simple as going in here, and assuming that this was just a data entry error I would change this value to 12/1, I would click Save Bills, and all would be right.

Now, I didn't go ahead and make those corrections because I still want to show you one more option for identifying data quality issues, and this is the data quality checker. So as you can see here we're on the summary tab for a building, and if you scroll down below your metrics summary box you'll see a box that says "check for possible data errors." This is the data quality checker. This checker will alert you to missing or incomplete data that must be fixed in order to calculate metrics. It will also identify areas in which the data you have entered may be atypical for your property type.

Now, when you get an alert in the data quality checker, especially one that says that your data are outside the range for a typical building, the value you've entered may in fact be correct but the purpose of the data quality checker is to get you to double-check what you've entered, especially if it turns out that these out of range values are due to a data entry error; for instance, the inadvertent addition of a few decimal places to a meter entry.

The data quality checker can't tell you for sure if the data you've entered are wrong; however, it can help you to identify abnormal metrics that could be resulting from incorrectly entered data. So to run the data quality checker you click on the button that says "check for possible errors" and then you select a 12-month period. I am going to select the period ending December 31st, 2016, which is consistent with that problematic period in my demo property that we saw earlier. I'm going to run the checker, and you'll see here that there are two critical errors in one warning. The two critical errors are the items that we already saw before; the fact that there's a gap in my water meter entries, and then the fact that there are not twelve full from full months of data for my electricity meter. Those are critical items that need to be fixed in order to generate meters.

You'll also see here that the data quality checker gives you more general alerts. So for instance, this will remind me that my property does not have any waste meters, and that's correct because I'm not tracking waste at this building. Again you don't need to take action on any of these yellow icons but they are there to alert you have something that you may want to go back and fix.

So each time you run the data quality checker you will need to tell the tool the 12-month period that you're trying to check. It will only identify issues within this timeframe. So in this example here, my data issues are in the last two months of 2016 and that's why they're showing up here. If I were to run the data quality checker for the period ending October 2016, you'll see that in fact there are no critical alerts there because my data are complete for that time period.

So the lesson here is if you are reporting your data for a specific time period you will want to make sure to run the checker for that time period before you report or share your data.

Okay. So there is one last option for error checking that I wanted to note, although I'm not going to show it to you just this moment. A little bit later in this presentation we're going to discuss the reporting functionality in Portfolio Manager; and in particular, the ability for users to set up their own custom reporting templates. I'm not going to show that at this moment because I don't want to get ahead of myself but the thing to be aware of is that you can set up reporting templates that include certain alert fields. Now, you're not going to be able to get quite as many alerts through the reporting function as you can through the data quality checker, but the value to running a check for alerts in the reporting functionality is that you can use the reporting option to identify potential data quality issues across multiple properties at one time instead of on a property-by-property basis.

And as we close out this section I just want to make you aware of a document that might be useful. It's available on the Energy Star training page and it's called List of Portfolio Manager Alerts. This is a summary of all the alerts that are currently generated by Portfolio Manager and tells you where those alerts might show up. The link to this resource is through the training page which I just showed you live and the actual link for you to click through will be included in the slides that will be posted following this webinar.

Okay. So at this moment let me click back over to my slides for a moment, so we should be back in your WebEx viewer seeing the the PowerPoint slides. And again, all of the information that I just demonstrated live we have that captured in slide format with static screenshots so that you'll be able to review this information later on your own time once the slides are posted to the HUD exchange.

All right. So moving on. Now, that you've benchmark in Portfolio Manager and you've used functionality within the tool to confirm the quality and accuracy of your data, now it's time to share and report your results with others. These are two related but separate tasks and we're going to spend a few minutes in this next section discussing them.

Okay. First, let's talk about sharing properties between Portfolio Manager users. Sharing a building with another Portfolio Manager user is comparable to putting a document on a shared network drive. In other words, multiple people can have access to the file; and if a shared user makes edits to that building record the changes will be visible to all. There's only one copy of the record. It doesn't make duplicate records; but the point is that that one version has multiple points of access.

The other important thing to note with regard to Portfolio Manager sharing is that different access levels can be assigned to different users in case you want to have full access for some users but read-only access for others.

So please note that more extensive guidance on sharing in Portfolio Manager is provided in the EPA training resources that are linked from the HUD toolkit. For this reason I'm not going to walk through the actual step-by-step sharing process today. I will note that the screenshot that is included on this slide depicts the main sharing page in Portfolio Manager, and this is the location where you select the properties that you wish to share, select the people or Portfolio Manager account holders with whom access will be shared; and then also select the level of access that you are providing.

Sharing is a great feature for use by housing providers with larger portfolios. For instance, all properties can be set up in a central Portfolio Manager account. And then specific properties can be down to those who may need access to those records on an ongoing basis. This allows for a division of labor and assignment of roles and responsibilities which can be documented within your organization's utility benchmarking plan.

In the simplified example that I'm showing on the slide all of the housing providers properties could be set up in a master or administrative Portfolio Manager account. Then a subset of these properties could be shared down to the Portfolio Manager accounts for the property management entities in charge of day-to-day operations for these properties. If appropriate, the property management entity could even share one step further, sharing individual properties down to the specific staff members responsible for those properties.

The point here is that sharing in Portfolio Manager allows users to establish hierarchical need-to-know relationships with their data and this is much more secure than simply sharing a single username and password across multiple users in the same organization.

Okay. So we just talked about sharing; now, I'd like to move on to reporting. Reporting in Portfolio Manager is different than sharing in that you are not providing access to an entire property record. Instead you are generating metrics for certain predefined fields. This may be more appropriate when you want to keep various stakeholders informed about property performance but you don't want to provide broad access to the complete property record.

Portfolio Manager has a number of predefined reporting templates that you can start using as soon as you have your properties benchmarked. These will show up in the Reporting tab of your Portfolio Manager account which we'll show you in just a minute. In addition to these predefined reports, you can also set up custom templates and you can run your own reports using these

templates. In this way you can determine the metrics that are most important to you in your organization and then quickly and easily use Portfolio Manager to generate those metrics for a specific set of properties for a specific timeframe.

Portfolio Manager's reporting functionality can help you to generate data for use inside your organization; and as we'll see in a few minutes, you can also use that functionality to respond to reporting requests that have been initiated by other Portfolio Manager users. So let's quickly see what one of the pre-existing report templates looks like in Portfolio Manager. In this case, we're going to take a look at the energy performance report.

All right. So let's go back live to the Web and once again you should be seeing the summary tab for my demonstration property in Portfolio Manager. I'm going to click on over to the Reporting tab, and what you can see here is a page that has a list of different reporting templates that you can select. So I'm going to go ahead and -- actually let's not select "energy preference;" let's go ahead and select "performance highlights."

The process of generating a report here is pretty simple. You go to the action drop-down list; you say I want to generate a new report. What you'll do then is you'll select a timeframe for that report; in this case let's just say it's the current energy year; you select a number of properties that you want to include in that report; I'm just going to say all the properties in my Portfolio Manager account. Because this is a predefined reporting template you don't need to choose the metrics; they've already been chosen for you. Then you just go ahead and you click "generate spreadsheet."

From there you're going to be taken back to the Reporting tab where the template that you've just selected will be at the top of the list and it will tell you that your report has been generated. To see the results you would go back to the Action tab and you'd click "I want to view current report." And there your results will be displayed in the Web browser and you can scroll across and you can see all the values that have been created for the buildings that you've selected.

And from here you can also choose to download this information either in Excel or in XML format. And again I want to note that Energy Star provides in-depth training resources that walk through the process of running these standard reports, and you can find the links to Energy Star training resources under the "Benchmarking 101: What Is Portfolio Manager" topic within the HUD utility benchmarking toolkit

So back to the main Reporting tab. As we noted earlier, Portfolio Manager users can also define their own templates and run custom reports using those templates. To do this we're just going to go ahead and click the button that says "create a new template." From there you'll be asked to name your template; you'll be asked to select the timeframe for your report -- which again, we can keep it simple and call it the current energy year, although you could also run a report that is a comparison of two years; there are a number of options here for timeframe. Again, you would select the properties that you want to include in your report and here's the thing that is custom about custom reporting. It allows you to select the information and metrics that you want to include in your report.

You'll note that you can select up to 50 fields from more than 1000 different options. These are grouped by information type to help guide your selection. You can see here that there's a category called data accuracy. This is where you would choose to include certain alerts in your reporting template just like I mentioned earlier. Again, it's not all the alerts that Portfolio Manager generates, but it is a good number of common alerts that may commonly pop up for properties. If you wanted to you could define a custom a custom report template that includes these alerts, and then when you run your report for multiple buildings you could see at a glance if any of those individual buildings are triggering any of these alerts.

So we're going to cancel out of this, but the point is once you have defined your custom template it will be showing up right here in your list of reports. And if you wanted to go and generate a report based on that temp you do so using the action drop-down list just as you would for any standard report.

So we're going to jump back to the slides one more time, and again as before, we just demonstrated some functionality live in Portfolio Manager; however we have captured this information here in the slides that will be posted later so that you can review them at your own leisure.

So one thing that I did want to demonstrate quickly is that in addition to running reports that provide detailed data in tabular format and Excel format, Portfolio Manager also allows you to generate a number of summary performance documents, including a statement of energy performance. These reports are pre-formatted and can serve as a snapshot in time of your property's performance.

Now, you can access these reports from the upper right-hand corner of the Reporting tab. You'll select which reports you want to run for which buildings for which timeframe, and what you'll get is you'll get the report downloaded in another window in your browser and you can download it as a PDF file. Again, it tells you all the information that the report would but in a different format that's easier to print out and share with others.

So as we wrap up our discussion of reporting we did want to include a quick note about working with third-party utility benchmarking software providers. If you choose to work with one of these organizations you may have access to additional reporting capabilities and a wide array of displays and visualizations that can help you to understand and make the most of your data. These reports may even go beyond the level of reporting provided with in Portfolio Manager. For instance they might compare your property's performance against a local peer group instead of a national data set; and we've got just a couple quick screenshots here that just give you a sense of the kind of data displays that third-party providers may be able to provide for you.

Please note -- and this has been stated on prior webinars -- but the decision to engage a third-party provider to help you with your utility benchmarking is entirely optional and it is not required in order to successfully perform utility benchmarking. However, some housing providers may definitely decide that that's the path they want to go down and that's perfectly acceptable.

Okay. So as the final item in our demonstration today, we want to discuss reporting your utility benchmarking results to HUD through Portfolio Manager. As we mentioned earlier, not only can a Portfolio Manager user set up and run their own reports, but organizations can also set up custom templates and publish these as data requests in order to collect data from other Portfolio Manager account holders. This is the process through which HUD will have housing providers submit utility benchmarking results when required.

The process of reporting utility benchmarking results to HUD is straightforward. First, you want to make sure that your property benchmarking records are complete and accurate using the data quality checking tools we discussed earlier. Once you confirm that you are ready to report, you're going to go ahead and you're going to click on the reporting link that is provided in the HUD multifamily utility benchmarking toolkit.

So let's go back to the Web and let's take a look at what that process looks like click-by-click. So here I am on the landing page for the multifamily utility benchmarking toolkit and we're going to look at the second module, "utility benchmarking step by step," and from this module we're going to go down to step 5, share the results. Here is a step-by-step process that you will need to go through which covers much of what we just discussed. At the bottom here there's a link.

So just so you're aware, what I'm showing you here on this page is a demonstration report link just for the purposes of this webinar so that you can see how the process works. HUD has not yet posted a link for its reporting template to the live utility benchmarking toolkit so if you were to go there right now you would not see this link; you would see a placeholder that says coming soon. HUD will be providing a link or links to a reporting template in the future. Ultimately there may be different reporting templates for use in different programs in order to accommodate slight variations and program requirements or HUD's internal IT systems.

However, HUD is striving to come up with one universal template that all housing providers will use regardless of their program. And no matter what, the reporting link or links as well as directions on which one of those links to click will be provided on the website.

Okay. With that stated I'm going to go ahead and click on the link to show you what happens. So after clicking on that link you'll see that it took me directly to a page in Portfolio Manager. If you are not currently signed into Portfolio Manager it will take you to a login screen and you'll be prompted to enter your username and password. That didn't happen to me because I was already logged into my Portfolio Manager account. However, even if you have to login, it's going to take you then - instead of taking you to your summary page it's going to take you directly to this screen, which is a "respond to data request" screen. This screen is going to include specific instructions from the requester and will also indicate information such as the point of contact or any questions you might have.

Unlike the pre-existing reporting functionality that we discussed earlier, when you are responding to a data request there are fewer options for you to select. The requester has already indicated what metrics are being collected and the timeframe for the report. All you need to do is indicate who is submitting the data and which properties you are including in your response.

So let's just say once again I'm going to go ahead and include all my properties. Once you've made the selection you'll click "generate response preview." This will take you back to the Reporting tab where this custom data request will have been added to your list of reports, and you'll see here it's right up top. From your list of reports then you'd come in here and you'd go to the action drop-down list and it would give you an opportunity to preview the response that is being provided based on the buildings you selected. You can select "preview response," and once again it displays your data right here on the screen for you to review; and if you'd prefer to review it in Excel you can do that as well.

Now, if in reviewing your data you notice that something was wrong or that something came through incomplete, you could always go back to the record for this building, you can make the corrections in Portfolio Manager; and then all you'd have to do is come back to this report and you click "generate an updated response." What that's going to do is it's going to run the data for the same buildings that you selected before but it's just going to take into account any more recent edits that you made to your information. Then, again you can preview your response again, confirm that it's ready to go; and then when you're satisfied that your data are complete and ready to report you would click "send response."

When you select "send response" you're going to be taken to a final confirmation page. This is where you can select if there are any other people in your contact list that you want to send a confirmation email to. You can choose whether you would like a copy of your data in Excel or XML format. And then you'll need to sign your data release, and the way you e-sign your data release is you check the check box saying you are certifying this release and then you sign using your username and password for your Portfolio Manager account. At that point you click "e-sign response" and the data will be submitted to the recipient.

In this case it would be HUD one thing to note is that even after submitting your data, HUD recommends that you retain all documentation related to the utility benchmarking process. This includes a copy of the Portfolio Manager confirmation email that you receive, a copy of the report submission in Excel format, a copy of all working documents used to collect and track raw data for input, a copy of all tenant-paid utility data release forms and correspondence; and a copy of correspondence with and reports from utility providers.

And once again, as we come back to the slides, everything that I just went through live is captured with screenshots on the slides that will be posted after this webinar.

And there you have it. That's all the basic information that you need to review data quality, to run reports, and to submit your utility benchmarking results to HUD.

So at this point I'd like to wrap up my section of this presentation and turn things back over to Scott who will close out today's webinar with a discussion of how you can move forward in using your benchmarking results to make informed decisions about your properties' utility performance. Scott?

Scott Ledford: Thank you very much, Andrew. So up to this point we focused a lot on how to get data into Portfolio Manager and perform utility benchmarking. However, keep in mind that in

the bigger picture this should really only be seen as a starting point rather than the finish line. With the effort behind you to get your properties benchmarked, now it's time to apply the results to help you make better informed decisions about utility consumption and cost management at your properties.

Let's look at a few examples of how you could use the results of your utility benchmarking efforts to inform next steps. As you can see here, Portfolio Manager has a built-in feature that graphs utility consumption by utility type. In this graph we can see a spike in water consumption from October to November. Now, it's important to consider that different utility types typically have seasonal variations which can be expected. For example, electricity consumption might be expected to go up during the cooling season; whereas natural gas consumption might be expected to go up during heating season. Similarly, outdoor water consumption might be expected to go up during the spring and summer when irrigation needs increase.

However, when you are actively looking and see such unexpected increases in utility consumption, they could point to issues in need of attention and possible correction. An unexpected spike like this in water consumption which is not consistent with seasonal norms could indicate a leak or water source that is not being turned off appropriately. An unexpected spike in electricity or natural gas consumption could indicate that a certain building system is not being turned off when intended, such as lighting controls that are no longer working and are therefore failing to turn off outdoor lighting during the day. Or there could be a malfunctioning meter or billing error from the utility provider that needs to be corrected, potentially resulting in immediate savings.

On the other hand, a gradual increase in utility consumption year-over-year could indicate that utility and management practices are not being implemented appropriately and need increased focus; especially when operating parameters like occupancy are not also changing over the same time period.

Of course, Portfolio Manager itself is not going to be able to tell you specifically what kind of issue is causing an increase in utility consumption, nor where the issue is occurring. That's the kind of thing that property-level staff will need to investigate and identify. However, this illustrates how using the data collected and the features of Portfolio Manager can help a housing provider be aware that there is an issue so next steps can be pursued to track down and remedy that issue.

The results provide by benchmarking in Portfolio Manager can also be valuable for looking at individual properties across diverse portfolios and understanding how they stack up against each other. The graph on this slide is an example of taking the individual Energy Star score of 11 different properties and graphing them in Excel. As a brief aside, note here that the Energy Star 1-100 Score facilitates comparisons across property types sizes configurations and other characteristics whereas a similar graph of energy use intensity for example might require a housing provider to account for such variations across a portfolio on their own; with the possibility of coming to inadequate conclusions about or explanations for relative performance across properties.

The Energy Star 1-100 Score can therefore be seen as a performance metric that helps you to do an apples-to-apples comparison across multiple multifamily properties with a variety of characteristics.

Okay. Back to the primary point of this slide I'm sure we can all appreciate that with a limited time and resources most of us have to work with it's probably not possible to make improvements or upgrades to all properties at once. But by now understanding which properties are currently performing most poorly, a housing provider could prioritize those for more immediate attention.

Importantly, the worst-performing buildings probably have the highest potential for utility consumption and cost savings. In fact, among buildings that consistently benchmarked over a three-year period, EPA analysis found that building starting with an Energy Star score below 50 save twice as much energy as those starting with higher Energy Star scores. Not only that, but since anywhere from 10 to 30 percent of savings can likely be found from no- and low-cost operational and maintenance strategies alone these low performing buildings may be the more cost effective to improve in-terms of savings per dollar invested. In other words, these poor performers probably represent the low-hanging fruit in a portfolio; and starting with these properties could return some early wins that help to generate organizational buy-in and momentum around efficiency and performance efforts.

Now, a housing provider could also graph energy use intensity, water use intensity cost, greenhouse gas emissions, or some combination of all of these depending upon their key focus areas in order to compare their properties. Do keep in mind, though, that variations in property contain property characteristics may need to be considered when doing so. And a housing provider may certainly have other non-utility considerations that could impact which properties get attention first.

The most important point, though, is that looking across a portfolio of properties can help you identify which ones are most in need of a need of immediate focus; and through such an analysis of your utility benchmarking data and results you can make more informed deliberate decisions regarding the application of staff time, operating your capital expenditures and other limited resources.

Looking at the other side of the coin now, you will also be able to identify top performers through these types of analyses. This can be useful for at least a couple of purposes. First, your top performers may be eligible for recognition. For example, if your property is receiving an Energy Star score of 75 or higher you may be eligible to apply for and receive the Energy Star certification for it, which provides the property with public recognition for superior energy performance. Energy Star certification can be a source of momentum for housing providers or energy and water management efforts, and help to generate excitement for ongoing efforts across other properties. It also allows the Energy Star brand to be leveraged to help communicate the property's success and tell its story.

Keep in mind, though, that you cannot have used sample data like we talked about in the third webinar to estimate total tenant-paid utility consumption cost if you are pursuing an Energy Star

certification. Even if your organization doesn't pursue formal recognition for a property, you can still highlight the top performers in your organization's portfolio through internal communications, newsletters and the like.

The second reason to take a look at top performers is that regardless of any formal certification it's likely that they are employing utility management practices that the lower performers are not. Working with the property level staff or these high performers, your organization can seek to identify and articulate just what it is that they are doing well. These specific elements could then be packaged up as best practices and shared across the broader portfolio. Especially for the lowest performers, which stand to benefit significantly from no- and low-cost operational enhancements, putting such best practices in place can be a way to jumpstart improvement.

There's also a goals tab for each property in Portfolio Manager where you can establish baselines and set targets at the property level. Note that when establishing a baseline, Portfolio Manager will default to using the first 12-month period; but you can change this, which may be particularly useful if you are doing a retrofit and want your baseline to be just prior to that retrofit.

When setting targets, it can be based on absolute or numerical increases in score or a percentage improvement of your baseline, for example. You can then take these property-specific data points and include them in custom reports in Portfolio Manager, which will then allow you to look at goals across properties within our portfolio. Again, there are training materials from Energy Star that you can access through the links within HUD's new toolkit which can help you to get these set up. Check out the "Portfolio Manager 301" course in this case.

When pursuing property improvements, consider whether to start small and work your way up from no- and low-cost operations and maintenance measures to larger capital intensive efforts. As we've discussed, eliminating energy water and financial waste can start with simply finding and fixing leaks, malfunctioning equipment and billing errors; and significant savings can be realized through no- and low-cost strategies alone. These are often focused on basic operations and maintenance as well as behavior change. By focusing first on the low-hanging fruit you can quickly and cost-effectively identify and eliminate unnecessary utility consumption and costs.

This can then clarify the picture of what a property's baseline energy performance should truly be. Then when it comes to investing more CapEx in energy performance measures you can be seeking to move the needle from this right-sized baseline.

One approach is to use the cost savings generated from early no- and low-cost measures to then reinvest in subsequent energy efficiency projects. A number of resources related to best practices for energy management in multifamily properties exist and are included as links both within the new toolkit and at the end of this presentation.

Now, let's take a look at what's coming next. The Better Buildings summit will be happening next week in Washington, DC. Webinar 6, which was originally scheduled for June 1st, is now being postponed. Julie is going to give us a little insight on this

Julia Hustwit: Thanks, Scott, and thanks for the great presentation, Scott and Andrew. I've been really excited for this webinar series to go forward and I hope that everyone on the phone has been enjoying it and finding it useful.

We do intend to have Webinar 6 as planned in the future but we are trying to decide on a new date for it. As you guys know, we have new administration in place and the process of getting political appointees in place across the building is taking a little bit longer than normal as a result we want to get a little bit better insight on the future of our proposed utility benchmarking requirements before we host that webinar so that we don't have to redo the webinar with new information too quickly.

Now, just as a reminder for folks on the phone, the utility benchmarking tool hit on tab 3 does list the requirements that are in place as well as those requirements and programs that are voluntary that have utility benchmarking as part of those voluntary programs. All that information is available for you to look at in its current status today, anytime you feel like it. And all the details and links to policy documents are available right there on the website, but we'll do webinar six once we can give a little bit more detail about the future of all of our utility benchmarking initiatives rather than just a few of them.

Scott Ledford: Okay. Thanks, Julia. If you are already registered for webinar 6, fear not, as you will remain registered and will be notified when the new date and time is determined. A message will also be sent to the broader listservs that were used to announce the webinar series as well as the individual webinars. And once again, you can find the archives for previous webinars under the invention training section of the utility benchmarking page on the HUD exchange.

Let's now turn to any content questions you have already submitted I remind you to submit any more that you may have at this point.

Andrew Schulte: So Scott, I'm taking a look at this and so far it doesn't look like we have received any questions, so a reminder to please submit those through the Q&A window in your WebEx viewer. If for some reason you have submitted a question please do let us know via the chat window. It's possible that you may have submitted but it did not come through but we can hang on for a few moments to see if there are any questions coming forward you.

Scott Ledford: Now, looks like we've had one pop in. Okay. There they're starting to flow, Andrew. I'll go ahead and start taking them here.

Andrew Schulte: Sounds good.

Scott Ledford: Okay. So we have a question from Tom. "Can I use the third-party benchmarking service for reporting to HUD?"

Julia Hustwit: This is a great question and I'm glad that you asked it, Tom. The answer is sort of -- yes and no. So you're absolutely welcome to use a third-party benchmarking service a lot of folks do use third-party benchmarking services for a variety of reasons. Every third-party benchmarking service that I am aware of connects to Portfolio Manager. The way that it works is

that if you're using a something that is effectively a third-party software tool which are available, then using that software tool you would export the data to Portfolio Manager to generate your report and send it in to HUD that way. So in other words the data would get transferred over to Portfolio Manager for you to generate your report but you'd be able to do all of your day-to-day work in the third-party software of your choice.

Scott Ledford: Okay. We have another question -- comment/question. It says, "Please review estimated tenant utility reports.

Julia Hustwit: So I may -- and Scott, I may send this back to you or to Andrew. I believe that the question is related to something we've talked about in past webinars, which is the use of sampled data to estimate whole-building data. And then the fact that when we do that we ask that you click the button in Portfolio Manager that marks that information as estimated.

And then of course there are, as Scott has reviewed -- maybe I'll just kick it over to you to go over in a little bit more detail -- effects that that has on the quality of your data and also your ability to apply for an Energy Star certification if you wish.

Scott Ledford: Yeah, sure. I'll pick it a little bit. And Andrew, I might pass it a little bit further along to you actually from the Energy Star perspective.

Andrew Schulte: Sure.

Scott Ledford: So as Julia mentioned in previous webinars we've gone through the four primary methods for getting to whole building data, and one of those was the ability to use a sample of tenant data in order to roll that up with your own repaid utility data in order to accomplish what we're calling whole building data, or whole property data.

Now, the dynamic here is that because it's not actual data, you do need to indicate in Portfolio Manager that you are using estimated data, whatever the sample size might be. And again we covered this in Webinar 3, but if you're taking a smaller subset of 100 tenant units and let's say you're using 10 of them or 20 of them, you're essentially extrapolating from that small sample to estimate what all tenant-paid utility consumption and cost data would be. So that's why you need to check estimated in Portfolio Manager. And Andrew maybe you could talk a little bit about kind of how that data gets used within Portfolio Manager and why it's really important to do that.

Andrew Schulte: Sure. And again, you have to check in Portfolio Manager next to a given utility meter entry or entries that the data reflects an estimation that will actually not cause any problems in terms of data quality checker. The data quality checker will run. It will check out as long as the information is in there the tool will generate Energy Star score, energy usage, water use intensity based on the energy data that you've put in.

The place where this does become an issue -- having estimated data -- is if you ended up having a score of 75 or higher and you wanted to apply for Energy Star certification. You would not be able to start down that path if you are using estimated data and this is because for purposes of

verification and just ensuring that the Energy Star recognition is only being provided to buildings that are using actual real-world data, that's a quality control measure that EPA has put in place.

So again, if you are using option D for collecting your data, if you are indicating in Portfolio Manager that those corresponding meter entries are estimated, you still will be able to generate all the metrics needed to go ahead and report your data to others including HUD. But the one thing you won't be able to do is apply for Energy Star certification with estimated data.

Julia Hustwit: I just want to add in one thing that I that that popped into my head that we haven't talked about recently, which is that a lot of folks across the country and an increasing number of places are subject to local benchmarking laws where they need to report the same way that we just showed through a reporting template in Portfolio Manager but to their city governments, and in some cases to the state government.

In those cases almost always -- at least with current laws that are in place at the at the city and state level across the country -- they do not allow the use of sample data. HUD is allowing the use of sample data for our purposes to make it easier for for you guys for the housing providers because we do realize that in certain areas of the country it is it can be more difficult than in other places to get the utility data and so we want to make it as light of a lift as possible.

But we are the only ones that I know of that allows the use of sample data and so do check with your local utility benchmarking laws when you go into this -- and I think we did review this in one of the prior webinars -- but you don't want to start down the path of sampling if your city or state requires you to do full data. So that's just something important to keep in the back of your mind.

Scott Ledford: Yeah. Absolutely. I agree. That's a great point Julia.

The other thing I'd say is if you are in this position to use sample or estimated data and you do end up with a good Energy Star score, well, that may also become an indicator to you that, hey, maybe it's worth going into some additional data collection in order to get full complete actual data for my property.

Andrew Schulte: That's a great point Scott. And looking at this question that came in I think we've answered this probably as completely as we can. If we didn't fully sort of respond based on what the questioner was was asking for please do let us know by the Q&A window.

With regard to actually showing or talking through the various sampling procedures, that's not something that we're going to have the opportunity to do over the next few minutes. In that case we would recommend taking a look back at the archived materials for Webinars 3 and 4, which touch on various aspects of sampling and getting sample data into Portfolio Manager

Scott Ledford: Yep. We only have a couple more minutes but we did have one more come in. Let's see if we can take this one real quick and then close ourselves out here.

"If you start with sampling and your jurisdiction requires actual at a later date are you able to make the change?"

Julia Hustwit: Mm-hmm. Yes. You sure can. I think one thing that it's important to keep in mind any time you talk about policy, whether at the local, state, or federal level is there's always going to be a time period between the announcement of a policy and actual implementation date. And generally we try to give as much time as we can while still getting things moving.

So suppose that you start benchmarking under a HUD program today and you're using sampling methods you might report for 2017 data to HUD, but then in 2018 your city comes in with the utility benchmarking law and they say, we're also requiring this practice and we're collecting data for our city purposes; we need you to use full data. Well, it's likely that you would make that transition at the new calendar year depending on when the new requirement for your local law comes into practice.

Now, you can always start adding more data in. Just because you are allowed to use a certain sampling protocol under HUD's policies doesn't mean that you're ever restricted from putting more data into the system. So suppose that you're in a sampling protocol that says for this property you need to sample at least 20 housing units. There's nothing that stops you and in fact we encourage you to sample 21, 22, 23 -- all of the units in your property.

So you might have a sample size that varies from year to year and then in some years -- especially in the case if your local law comes into place where you go to 100 percent data -- as long as you don't drop below the minimum that HUD requires then you're fine for our requirements and you just want to meet the minimum that your locality requires for the time period that they're asking your reporting to be for. And generally speaking, people use the calendar year as the reporting period for benchmarking.

I hope that answered the question. It was a little convoluted. But it didn't I can expand on it.

Scott Ledford: Okay. Well, we are running out of time here so I'm just going to go ahead and wrap us up real quick, with a note that here's another summary of the resources related to the content we've covered today. Again, many of them are existing Energy Star resources and you can access them by linking through from the multifamily utility benchmarking toolkit, which is the link at the top of this slide.

The list is a little bit longer this week but again you can get to all these resources either through the toolkit or when these slides are posted on the HUD Exchange.

This is the contact information for each of today's presenters and we thank you once again for joining these webinars about multifamily utility benchmarking. Keep an eye out for updates about a new date for Webinar 6 and we wish you all the best in your utility benchmarking efforts as well as building on that success. Goodbye for now.

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