Benchmarking.Energy Frequently Asked Questions

Sponsored by AEP Ohio and Columbia Gas

About Benchmarking.Energy

What is Benchmarking.Energy?

Benchmarking.Energy is a no cost service for AEP Ohio and Columbia Gas business customers.

Enrollment is simple and provides you with 36 months of historical energy usage, data visualization, an established ENERGY STAR® profile to benchmark your energy performance, and tools to help you track and manage your energy use.

Am I eligible to participate in Benchmarking.Energy?

If you are an AEP Ohio or Columbia Gas business customer, you are eligible to participate in Benchmarking.Energy. Usage data from these utilities will be automatically uploaded to Benchmarking.Energy on a monthly basis.

You also have the ability to manually add data on other energy sources directly into Benchmarking.Energy in order to get a comprehensive look at your energy consumption.

Why should I benchmark?

According to ENERGYSTAR.gov, "measuring, tracking and benchmarking of energy across all operations are your most powerful energy waste reduction tools," and will reduce your company's energy requirements, save money and minimize energy-related impacts on the business.

Measuring and tracking your energy data allows you to understand and manage your energy consumption; benchmarking compares your energy performance to buildings of similar use to help you determine how well you are doing and establish realistic goals.

I am an industrial customer and not eligible for benchmarking with an ENERGY STAR score. Why should I sign up for Benchmarking.Energy?

There is tremendous value in tracking your energy use and trends, even if you are not eligible to receive an ENERGY STAR score.

The data will allow you measure your usage, calculate energy intensity (aka Energy Utilization Index (EUI)), and track performance against energy savings goals to save costs and improve performance.

It looks like there is no cost for me to use Benchmarking.Energy. What's the catch?

There's no catch! Benchmarking.Energy is a risk free, no cost tool provided to you by AEP Ohio and Columbia Gas in order to help you track and manage your energy use.

Getting Set Up

How do I enroll?

There are four main steps to enrolling in Benchmarking.Energy:

1. Establish an account (email address, password, etc.)
2. Agree to the Terms and Conditions - most importantly, confirming that you are an authorized representative of the organization you are enrolling
3. Connect with your AEP Ohio and Columbia Gas accounts by providing account information and verifying billing data to import energy usage history
4. Provide additional information about your building(s) to establish an ENERGY STAR® score

Full instructions are available here.

What do I need to enroll in Benchmarking.Energy?

Before you begin, please make sure to have the following information ready to go:

1. One current and one previous utility bill to validate usage
2. The account number
3. The account service address

This information will allow you to enroll in the program, view 36 months of historical energy usage and visualize data usage trends.

Visit https://www.benchmarking.energy to begin enrolling in Benchmarking.Energy and see full instructions here.

What do I need to enroll in ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager®?

If you would also like to establish a Portfolio Manager profile to obtain an ENERGY STAR score and benchmark your performance against other similar buildings, you will need:

1. **Property information**
   - Building type (e.g. office, retail, etc.)
   - Name, street address, ZIP/postal code
2. **Property type data**
   - Gross floor area
   - Use details (e.g., number of workers, operating hours, etc.)
3. **Utility bills**
   - Power purchased from a third party and any other energy sources aside from AEP Ohio and Columbia Gas
   - NOTE: Utility bill information from AEP Ohio and Columbia Gas will be uploaded automatically; you only need to provide information on other energy sources

If you already have an ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager account, your accounts can easily be linked to Benchmarking.Energy. Instructions are available here.

What happens if the most recent bill I have is 3 months old?

For the security of customer information, we require users to have access to at least one recent bill and one additional bill from the last 14 months.

To access your AEP bills, you can log in to your AEP Ohio account or contact AEP's Business Solutions Center at 888-710-4237. The Business Solutions Center hours of operation are Mon-Sat from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM. To access your Columbia Gas bills, you can log in to your Columbia Gas account or contact 1-800-344-4077.

If the account number is available then why is the usage required?

Belt-and-suspenders security! Just like two-factor authentication on your phone or email account, we're requiring both the account number and values off of actual bills.

This helps us to validate that you are an authorized account representative and keeps your data safe.

What if my facility is New Construction?

We know that you won't have any billing history. Contact us at support@benchmarking.energy. We can get you enrolled.

I already have a Portfolio Manager Account and properties. How do I link them with the AEP Ohio and Columbia Gas Program?

Existing Portfolio Manager Accounts can easily be linked to Benchmarking.Energy. Instructions are available here.

Understanding the Data

Is the billing data by calendar month or by actual billing dates? If by billing dates, how do you account for some bills with 28 days and others with 33 days?

Energy data provided by AEP Ohio and Columbia Gas corresponds to your actual bills, and therefore the same meter read and bill dates.

When manually entering meter data, you have the option for a "quick entry" that uses simple monthly inputs (Jan, Feb, Mar, etc..) and a true date range entry. Using true date range entry is preferred, and gives you the ability to enter actual billing dates.

Can the utility information be exported to Excel?

Coming soon!

I set up the Benchmarking.Energy account and linked my AEP Ohio and Columbia Gas accounts. I can see my energy data but no information about costs. Where do I find cost information?

Benchmarking.Energy works with ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager® to help you use actual, measured energy data to assess how your building's energy use is performing compared to other buildings of similar use nationwide. Cost information is not included.

I set up my Benchmarking.Energy account and I need to do more to save energy. What do I do next?

Customers who would like assistance in achieving their energy goals can contact their AEP Ohio Energy Advisor or find a great industry partner on the AEP Ohio Solution Providers list, or contact the Innovative Energy Solutions program team at Columbia Gas.

Integrating with ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager®

So...no more manual entry of AEP Ohio and Columbia Gas utility bills in Portfolio Manager?

Correct, we are trying to eliminate as much manual data entry as possible. Your data from AEP Ohio and Columbia Gas will automatically synchronize directly to Portfolio Manager each month.

You also have the ability to manually add data on other energy sources directly into Benchmarking.Energy in order to get a comprehensive look at your energy consumption and keep your ENERGY STAR® score up to date.

Does this replace Portfolio Manager?

Benchmarking.Energy interacts with, but most likely will not replace, Portfolio Manager. However, it should replace the average customer's need to interact directly with Portfolio Manager because information is shared between the two systems.

If I set this up, do I still need to update data on Portfolio Manager?

Benchmarking.Energy will automatically update your electric and natural gas usage information from AEP Ohio and Columbia Gas on Portfolio Manager!

Other energy data can be added manually on Benchmarking.Energy. However, if you also use Portfolio Manager to track other measures like costs, water or waste, then you will need to continue entering that information directly on Portfolio Manager.

Does this program assist with ENERGY STAR certification (for those buildings with a score above 75)?

If your building scores above a 75, applying for ENERGY STAR certification is a great idea! Assistance with obtaining ENERGY STAR certification is not currently part of this program. See the [AEP Ohio Solution Providers](#) list to find a partner!

How are buildings with multiple meters scored (if some meters are controlled by tenants)?

Buildings with multiple meters will need to link each meter in order to obtain an ENERGY STAR Score. If there are fewer than 5 tenants, each tenant will need to provide authorization for their meter to be enrolled. If there are 5 or more tenants, data can be aggregated with AEP Ohio assistance. Contact us if you fit this description and we can help!

Other

If I set up a Benchmarking.Energy account and link my AEP Ohio and Columbia Gas accounts, is the information available publicly?

Your information is not available publicly for anyone to view. It is accessible to AEP Ohio and Columbia Gas program managers and to the software providers and program managers at JadeTrack.

Full details of how the data may be used and shared are available in the [terms of use](#) and [privacy policy](#).

For managers that have properties in multiple markets, do you know if other electric or natural gas energy providers have similar programs?

We believe that this program is unique in Ohio, if not the national utility marketplace. If you'd like to recommend Benchmarking.energy to your other service providers, please contact us at support@benchmarking.energy.

Do we need to install sub-meters for this program?

Only enter your utility billing meters. You can link your AEP Ohio account and Columbia Gas account to connect your electric and natural gas meters, respectively.

All manually entered meters are assumed to be part of the building's total consumption. Entering submeters may risk double-counting this data, and could result in a lower ENERGY STAR® score.

How do I make changes to my baseline year?

Baseline year setting is not currently incorporated into the program.

If I am a Solution Provider, can I include several customers under my user ID?

No, but we want to provide Solution Providers and customers with a means of connecting and sharing information. Customer-Solution Provider linking and sharing is currently in development. For now, enroll your own facilities, and keep your eye out for our next webinar!