

Introduction

While much of the savings achieved from a comprehensive retrofit of municipal buildings will be the result of new technology and upgraded equipment, a surprising level of efficiency depends on user practices. The daily energy consumption by individuals either working for, or using municipal facilities, is a critical element of any effective energy management campaign. Up to five per cent of the total utility costs of a municipality can be influenced with effective communication strategies that sensitize users to energy efficiency.

By promoting your retrofit program to the broader community you increase the program's profile and the adoption of energy-efficiency measures. Local media and non-government organizations interested in energy issues are excellent partners in promoting the program. Creating public interest in energy retrofit work also stimulates local business and further decreases greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution.

Resources Available

This Communications Manual provides guidance on harmonizing your communications plan with the technical aspects of a building retrofit program.

Additional resources are also available. A Manager's Guide to Creating Awareness on Energy Efficiency developed by Natural Resources Canada (available in both English and French) and *Trousse D'Efficacité Energetique pour le Milieu Municipal* from the Agence de l'efficacité énergétique du Québec (available in French only) are comprehensive user guides that provide concrete tools for implementing a communications strategy. Both guides include excellent templates, posters, sample newsletters and news releases. Your municipality is free to use all logos, design concepts, slogans, and model text in the manual. Electronic copies are provided in the Resource Manual for easy adaptation and editing.

If you have not already received your a copy of these publications, please contact FCM staff.

Remember, you don't need to reinvent the wheel. Use the information and communication resources readily available to you – the resource guides, human resources staff, the Green Leaf™ Assessment, and staff liaison channels that already exist within your municipality.

Objectives of a Communications Plan

The four main objectives of a communication plan are to:

1. Ensure awareness of energy retrofit work among employees directly affected by the activity
2. Encourage employee participation in non-technical (non-capital) energy conservation activity
3. Promote the co-benefits of the retrofit work in the larger community – environmental, economic, and social
4. Encourage community participation in energy conservation activity that will address “indirect” municipal emissions.

These objectives are listed in order of priority and may be addressed to varying degrees depending on the personnel and financial resources your municipality is able to dedicate. Remember that Objective 2, end-use participation, can account for up to five per cent of energy-savings.

Case Example:

Canada's Department of National Defense has undertaken energy retrofits at bases across the country. CFB Halifax employs approximately 4,400 military and 1,600 civilian personnel. Their background research revealed that one computer left on after hours cost \$63 per year while a task light left on each night wasted \$34 in electricity annually. A ten-year, \$250,000 employee awareness campaign at the base is estimated to save \$600,000 annually, and pay for itself in five months – not a bad return on investment!

Benefits of a Communications Plan

A well-executed communications plan has numerous benefits. Informed employees have fewer questions or complaints during construction phases, and engaged and educated employees more consistently apply energy-saving measures in their workplace and beyond.

Savings with no capital costs

Engaging all users of your facilities in energy-conservation measures is an important complement to the physical upgrades you are planning. The result is savings with almost no capital outlay through small, independent measures undertaken voluntarily by all staff – not just those whose work relates to facility operations. The only costs associated are for promotional and informational materials and activities – many of which already exist (e.g., pay stub memos, staff newsletters and staff committees).

Keeping employees informed of changes in their work area

Keeping employees well informed of the objectives and the timing of retrofit work will reduce complaints during construction phases. Employees will understand why the work is taking place and will be able to anticipate and prepare for minor disturbances.

In some cases, retrofit work will result in changes in staffing requirements. Union members informed about the process and rationale for the retrofit program will be more flexible with respect to retraining staff or other measures taken to address staffing changes.

In some cases, energy-efficiency strategies will affect the routine in the workplace or community spaces. In many buildings you should consult with the tenants during the planning stage to discuss how their operations can best be adapted to meet energy-conservation goals. Some examples include adapting lighting controls to the needs of certain activities (skating lessons versus hockey games in an arena), scheduling activities so there are no requirements for rapid temperature changes in one building, or adjusting housekeeping schedules to reduce overall run-time of lights.

Champions need help

Working in isolation to promote a new idea is a daunting task. The more employees who know what energy-efficiency work is taking place and why, the more they will encourage fellow employees to take part. The energy-efficient actions will eventually become habitual and ultimately become a part of the workplace culture.

Leadership in the community

Informal lines of communication also help to promote the project. Employees often share news with family and friends, spreading feedback to the rest of the community. Positive feedback increases a municipal government's profile as an environmental leader and highlights the tax dollar savings that are being achieved. A positive response from employees will lead them to consider energy conservation in their own homes, stimulating further "green investment" in the local economy and reducing community-based greenhouse gas emissions.

Involve HR and communications people

A municipality is a diverse workplace. In some ways it operates like several small, independently operated businesses, and disseminating information in this kind of institution can be challenging. The most important communication resource already exists within your municipality in the human resources department. An HR representative should be included in your energy team from the start.

Human resources personnel are already experienced in distributing information to municipal staff, and are aware of workplace culture and employee/union expectations. Building on their experience of other communication campaigns, they know how certain types of information are likely to be received and how to present information to achieve a positive response among employees.

Some municipalities may also have the services of a marketing or promotions department. Encourage each member of your energy team to become a "champion" for their own department – it often takes just one person to set an example and get the ball rolling.

Harmonization with technical aspects of your retrofit plan

The communications plan outlined in the supporting guides, NRCan / QAEE reference manual, complements the technical components of a good retrofit process. Your municipality may have undertaken the Green Leaf™ Phase I Assessment described earlier in the Resource Manual. The Green Leaf™ results, and subsequent data collection, are a valuable resource for communication staff.

Timing the Communication Plan

The recommended strategy for a building retrofit program, as outlined in this Guide, begins with a core team of people who collect information at a gradually increased level of detail. The Project Proposal (the final document before implementation is approved) will contain specifics on buildings and equipment, timelines, costs, financing, and anticipated qualitative and quantitative results.

Since the benefits of the staff awareness program will contribute to financial savings, the costs of the campaign can be included in the overall project expenses. When a Project Proposal is submitted to Council, it should include details of the communications plan, such as who will be involved in its delivery, how many hours of staff time it will require, how much it will cost, and what benefits (qualitative and quantitative) it will provide.

Internal communication in advance of Council submission is essential as key staff may be required to answer questions from councillors on the physical plans and anticipated benefits. Preparing councillors with the proposal details in advance will enable them to ask questions and obtain additional information that will speed the decision-making process once your proposal is tabled.

The communication campaigns to staff and the public can begin as soon as Council approval and budget is obtained for the project's implementation.

The following timeline provides a brief overview of the planning stages. This timeline is intended only as a reference to bring the steps recommended in the MBR process into context with recommendations in the communications materials provided. Review the NRCan and/or QAEE materials carefully and make use of the supplementary resources provided.



The Communications Strategy and the 8 Steps of Municipal Building Retrofit Process

Step 1

A Letter of Commitment is signed between your municipality and FCM.



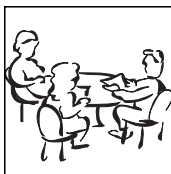
Step 2

Strategic-level data is collected on your municipality's preparedness for undertaking a retrofit program. The Green Leaf™ Assessment process, if you chose to participate, focuses on human resources, policy and technical baselines for the physical retrofit. At this time, it is useful to determine what channels of communication already exist within the municipality, the standard methods used to inform staff about policy and physical changes happening in their workplace, what existing staff committees (if any) can assist in the communication process, and any other relevant information to build a picture of the municipality's existing communications resources.

Some questions in the Communications Manual are also required for the Green Leaf™ Assessment so take care not to duplicate efforts – use any information that is already available. Some examples include:

- Are energy-efficiency education programs already in place? (Green Leaf™ Communications on Utility Use)
- What other community programs (environmental or energy related) can be used as tie-ins to the current project? (Green Leaf™ Political Commitment and Stewardship)
- Does an environmental committee already exist and can these people be used as “department champions”? (Green Leaf™ Political Commitment and Stewardship)
- What financial resources already exist to support this type of promotion? (Green Leaf™ Financial Considerations)

If you have chosen not to undertake the Green Leaf™ Phase I Assessment, you may find similar information in other preparatory work undertaken.



Steps 3 and 4

During the development of your municipality's retrofit Action Plan you should begin to develop your broad communication strategy. Which of the available tools will be used? What new tools need to be created? How are the resources, provided in the NRCan and/or QAEE materials, applicable to your municipality and who will be responsible for this component of the retrofit program?



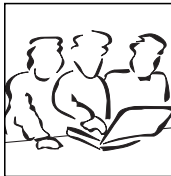


Step 5

While the project proposal is being developed, ensure that the human component of energy savings – harnessed through your communications plan – is included. Refer to the Green Leaf™ Assessment, subsequent building-level data, and human resources files to determine the details of promotional materials required. How many buildings will require posters, signs, and energy “champions”? How many elevators and bathrooms are there? Which facilities need photocopier or computer-relevant information, and which need other specific equipment-relevant information?

Internal memos and newsletters during Step 5 should introduce the concept of a retrofit program, what a generic retrofit might involve, and the potential benefits. Indicate that this is something the municipality is considering and why. If possible, staff should be informed in advance of the proposal to Council – they will appreciate hearing about it internally before they read it in the papers.

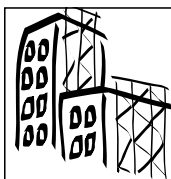
As with the physical aspects of your retrofit program, details of your communications plan will be completed for inclusion in the final Project Proposal. Comments provided here in Steps 6 to 8 suggest the strategic timeline for communicating during proposal implementation.



Step 6

Once Council has approved the Feasibility Study and project budget, you can begin to promote the details of the retrofit program. What measures are being undertaken, when is the work scheduled to happen in specific locations, what are the anticipated benefits to employees, the municipality and the community, and what role will employees play in making this project a success? At this time you will also begin to communicate your plans to the broader community.

Again, the Green Leaf™ Assessment questionnaire can be a valuable resource. The baseline research conducted on the project provides excellent facts and “sound bites” that can be used in news releases and newsletters. FCM’s Web site (<http://kn.fcm.ca>) features case studies of municipalities that have already undergone retrofit projects. Testimonials from staff and confirmed energy savings data support the benefits of the work you are undertaking.



Step 7

During the implementation phase, it is important to remind employees of when (if at all) their workspace will be disturbed and what tools or strategies you may have put in place to mitigate any problems.

This is also a good time to engage employees in the human aspects of energy savings. Fact sheets, posters and other reminder tools can be used to encourage employees to shut off lights not in use, turn off computers at the end of the day, close blinds in the summer, and other suggestions recommended in the manual or by your energy services company. The NRCan and/or QAEE materials provide more detail on this stage of the process.

**Step 8**

Monitoring and verification provides confirmation that the strategies implemented have had the desired effect and that your money was spent wisely. Celebrate your success – make your employees and the community aware of your progress and validate your employees' participation as an important part of this achievement.

Your employee education program should remain ongoing and should be creative to keep their attention. Seasonal variation in energy-savings recommendations, employee turnover, and forgetfulness will all contribute to a gradual decrease in the effectiveness of the human component of energy savings.

Beyond municipal building retrofits

Once the retrofit work has been successfully completed at municipal facilities, it is time to consider taking energy efficiency to the broader community and encourage commercial and residential initiatives to reduce building energy use. The MBR Guide contains a chapter entitled Community-Wide Retrofits that provides additional resources and case examples for engaging the broader community in energy-efficiency retrofit work.

