



14. Engagement strategies

You can improve your centre's energy efficiency through a combination of improved design, more efficient technology and changes in people's behaviour.

Engaging people at all levels in your organisation to adopt energy saving habits is critical to the success of your energy savings plan.

Promoting energy efficiency

It is a good idea to nominate one person or a small group to co-ordinate your energy efficiency plan. This person or group can provide focus, conduct research and offer information to the whole team.

Energy efficiency efforts will be much more effective if you have the support and involvement of everyone: the board, staff, volunteers, cleaning and maintenance staff and users of your community centre.

Getting started

Start with some baseline observations and measurements such as how many monitors or lights are left on; what are the patterns in use of the air conditioner and how aware people in the centre seem to be about saving energy, etc.

Get some impressions of the knowledge, attitudes and practices that are typical. This gives you a way of evaluating if people are becoming more engaged or not. Being judgmental and pouncing on slip-ups will quickly get people off side.

Set a positive tone

Explain that improving energy efficiency is a positive challenge. Reinforce the benefits in



cost and environmental savings.

Tailor your message. Recognise that different people will have different motivations. Accept that some people adapt to change more quickly than others.

Change is difficult for many people. They may be busy, stressed and/or preoccupied. Pick your moment to raise issues and frame any feedback or requests in a positive way.

Make it a team sport

Talk to and include as many people as possible in your planning. Ask for ideas and input. Have a team walk around the building to identify issues.

Invite people to share ideas on a staff blog or on a Facebook page. You could run a competition for ideas.

Make it easy to do the right thing

Put up friendly and/or funny signs; provide easy-to-access switches and pre-set temperature ranges.



Celebrate and highlight success

Revisit your initial observations; collect some anecdotal evidence of improvements – perhaps quotes from staff and program participants that reflect the changes people have made.

Measure energy consumption, then tell the team the results. Involve everyone in telling the stories of success. Put up a sign on your organisation's progress in the group rooms for program participants to read.

Instituting energy efficient behaviours, like many changes, will be incremental. It can help to adopt the motto 'it's about progress not perfection'. Getting the lights off promptly seven out of ten times is definitely better than never.

Further resources

Check out A Greenhouse Around the Corner website:

www.agreenhouse.net.au/helpful-resources

Related fact sheets

Fact sheets 2: Being an energy efficient leader in your community

Fact sheet 15: Signage and changing behaviour

For more fact sheets, go to A Greenhouse Around the Corner website:

www.agreenhouse.net.au/fact-sheets

Provide information

Introduce a small educational item at each staff meeting, show people how to set up power saving computer settings. In hot weather, focus on cooling and in cold times make heating the theme.

Tailor your message

Most people will respond more to interaction and face-to-face discussion, so don't just rely on signs. Some people will take more notice of emails, others will prefer Facebook discussion or a professional development session that includes group discussion and planning.

Some people respond to data so having an energy consumption meter that gives real time feedback can be very motivating.

