

Green Communities Annual Report Webinar

Questions & Answers

October 23, 2014

General Questions

Q: What do you do with all of this data from Green Communities? Do you produce any cumulative reports?

Yes, DOER will be publishing a progress report that summarizes progress and data on all of the criteria from the FY2013 annual reports later this fall. The efficiency efforts by the Green Communities and their progress to reduce energy usage is published in an American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy paper and can be accessed here:

<https://www.aceee.org/files/proceedings/2014/data/papers/5-141.pdf>. DOER files an annual report with the legislature each spring, those reports are titled "Green Communities Division Annual Report" and can be found on DOER's website at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/energy-utilities-clean-tech/green-communities/publications-and-reports.html>. Finally, DOER uses the data contained in the annual reports for a variety of other uses such as informing public speaking engagements and reporting greenhouse gas emission reductions.

Q: Are project tables just for projects in the reporting year or for all projects during the time a community has been a Green Community?

All tables in the annual report should include all of the projects in all of the years for the timeframe that a municipality has been a Green Community. The idea is that the annual report serves as a complete record for a Green Community's efforts and achievements.

Q: For those of us who have already filed previously, I am assuming that my [reporting] dates are July 1, 2013 through June 31, 2014? If we were not part of the grant process this past year do we just fill in the basic items and stretch code items?

For Green Communities that have filed an annual report previously, please report for FY2013: July 1, 2013 through June 31, 2014. For Green Communities that have not filed an annual report previously, please report for January 1, 2012 through June 31, 2014. Annual reporting is independent of the designation and competitive grant processes and reporting, thus all Green Communities should ensure that all of their annual report tables are complete and correct.

Criteria 3 – Energy Baseline and Reduction Plan

Q: How do you enter RE into MEI?

Renewable energy production can be loaded into MassEnergyInsight in two ways: either manually typing in the usage for each account or using an excel file (version .xls) to load multiple months and/or accounts. For help in understanding these processes, please login to MassEnergyInsight, click on "Support" at the upper right of the screen, click on "Videos," and watch either "Edit Energy Account Info and Use Data" or "Uploading a Spreadsheet." Both videos are less than five minutes long. Remember that loaded data will not display until the following day. For further help, please contact Peregrine Energy Group through the "Contact Support."

Q: Should solar PPA be reported on this report as an energy reduction?

No. Criterion 3 is for a 20 percent reduction in energy usage. Renewable energy does not count towards this reduction and usage of solar-generated electricity must be included in Table 3 - Energy Usage. Solar PPAs may be reported in Table 5 – renewable energy projects.

Q: How do we show the building area changes approved by DOER that affects the baseline?

First, please remind DOER of any building stock changes that have occurred since the baseline year on the Criterion 3 page, question 7. Second, Table 2 should reflect building area changes. Ideally, a Green Community will have two Table 2s in that tab: one containing the unadjusted data and the other containing the adjusted data. A description and the calculations for energy use adjustments must be shown. For example, a school addition that doubled its size could be shown as: “School 2012 addition increased square footage from 100,000 to 200,000 square feet. Total energy usage = 50 MMBtu. $50 \text{ MMBtu} \times 0.50 = 25 \text{ MMBtu}$.” If a Green Community wishes to make an energy adjustment in MassEnergyInsight to perform this type of calculation automatically, please contact Aimee.Powelka@state.ma.us.

Q: Slide 46 - what utility is this? You are saying there is not much change, looks like a lot of change based on weather?

Slide 46 illustrates the MassEnergyInsight report Baseline – Weather Normalized to show the impact of weather normalization on the baseline of two Green Communities. For these two communities, the weather normalization can be seen to have a small impact on some years and a more significant impact on other years.

Q: Why can't we use normalized for weather data as it shows a bigger energy use reduction? We have a 11% difference between normalized baseline and regular baseline.

Green Communities vary in the amount of their baseline energy usage attributable to buildings, an average that typically ranges between 63 and 73 percent, but can be as low as 24 percent. Buildings are the only type of energy usage that can be weather-normalized. To retain parity between Green Communities that use differing amounts of energy for buildings, while still acknowledging that weather plays an impact on energy usage, DOER intends to allow Green Communities to assess their energy reduction at the end of their fifth or sixth year to see if they meet their 20 percent energy reduction consumption.

Q: Do you mean normalizing for vehicle use because we use our vehicles a lot for plowing?

Green Communities do use more energy to plow the roads during snowy years due to the additional operating hours for their snowplows. Energy usage for vehicles may increase for a variety of reasons including snowy years, increased road construction, or public events.

Q: What if our energy usage is "better" than 20% savings from our baseline using weather normalized, but not when using raw data. How will this affect us, particularly if this is our 5th year, and we've had better than 20% energy savings in previous years?

DOER intends to allow Green Communities to assess their energy reduction at the end of their fifth or sixth year to see if they meet their 20 percent energy reduction consumption. When assessing progress towards the 20 percent energy reduction, DOER will be looking for the trends in energy consumption as well as the overall percent reduction. Thus, a Green Community that has “achieved” a 20 percent energy use reduction with weather-normalized data, but not with raw data, will certainly have demonstrated a significant energy use reduction and should be able to achieve 20 percent the following year.

Q: What is the thinking moving forward if a community does not reach their 20% by the end of the 6th year?

Any Green Communities that have not achieved their 20 percent reduction after 5 or 6 years will not lose their designation status or their ability to apply for competitive grant funding if they continue to comply with the requirements of the program. DOER would like to have additional conversations with any Green Communities that do not reach their 20 percent reduction by the end of their 6th year in order to assess the barriers and assist in finding solutions.

Q: What if due to bringing new buildings online and repairing failed equipment in old buildings we are never able to hit the 20% energy use below our baseline?

First, new buildings that are not replacement buildings are excluded from the energy baseline and will not inhibit the achievement of a 20 percent energy use reduction. Second, each Green Community is unique in both its challenges and opportunities and DOER is willing to work with each Green Community to achieve their full energy savings potential. There are, however, instances in which energy use increases after efficiency upgrades. For example, the addition of air conditioning or the repair of non-functional building systems, such as ventilation systems, is a common occurrence when energy efficiency retrofits are implemented and can increase energy usage. So, while the total energy usage of specific buildings may increase as they become healthier workspaces, the municipality-wide energy use baseline should present separate and additional opportunities for energy savings that may be able to offset that increased energy usage.

Q: My Crit 3- Table 4 ECMs did have the project type column added but did NOT have the status column added. Should I add it myself?

If there are issues with any of your Tables missing data or columns, please contact your Regional Coordinator.

Criteria 4 – Fuel Efficient Vehicles

Q: Has DOER updated the Fuel Efficiency guidelines since August 2013?

No, August 2013 was the last update to the vehicle fuel efficiency guidelines.

Criteria 5 – Stretch Code

Q: What is an example of stretch code violation as reported in annual report form?

An example of a stretch code violation as reported in an annual report form would be when a new residential construction home doesn't achieve an applicable HERS rating or if an Occupancy Permit is issued for a home that didn't receive a HERS rating and should have.

Q: So leave the prepopulated info in Table 7 from last year?

Either way is fine, it is not necessary. The RC's will pre-populate Table 7.

Q: Are we ONLY putting in projects that have HERS ratings or new construction, or everything? We have to guess what renovations are affected by the stretch code by reading the descriptions of the projects. We only know explicitly if there is a HERS rating or if it is new commercial.

All building permits that are subject to the Stretch Code should be included. This includes new residential construction, renovations, additions and commercial/industrial.

Q: I think we could use a webinar or in person session on what the stretch code affects.

We will take that into account.

Q: The local building department reviews hundreds of permits, they gave us a file that was 350 pages long, with 6-8 projects per page, when we asked for the report of permits. That was JUST FY2014.

All building permits that are subject to the Stretch Code should be included. This includes new residential construction, renovations, additions and commercial/industrial. Not all building permits are subject to the Stretch Code, i.e., wiring, plumbing, roofing, anything that doesn't open up the envelope.

Q: My past stuff was deleted, except for "active" permits. We have to go back to previous years for permits to include this FY cert of occupancy & HERS certifications.

No.