



BOMA
BEST®

ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager FAQ

BOMA BEST® 3.0 (the online platform) is integrated with ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager (ESPM) for all energy and water benchmarking. This means that the energy and water consumption data provided by users will be converted to an Energy Use Intensity, Water Use Intensity, and ENERGY STAR Score (if applicable) using the ESPM methodology.

All asset classes assessed in the new BOMA BEST® Online Portal must use these directives. This includes:

- Office
- Enclosed Shopping Centres
- Open Air Retail
- Light Industrial
- Multi-Unit Residential Buildings
- Health Care
- Universal



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1. About ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager

1.1. Why is energy or water benchmarking important?

You can use energy and water benchmarking data to assist decision-makers to make wise decisions on how energy and water are consumed.

- You will know if your building's energy or water performance is improving or getting worse.
- You will be able to easily manage for improvement because you will be actively measuring how much energy or water your building is consuming.
- After implementing improvements, you will quickly be able to identify what is getting better and what isn't.

1.2. What is ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager?

ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager (ESPM) is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's interactive energy management tool that is free to use and allows you to track and assess energy and water consumption across your entire portfolio of buildings in a secure online environment. It offers weather-normalized energy use intensity values, greenhouse gas emission metrics, reporting features that help you track trends over time, and 1-100 energy performance scores for eligible building types.

1.3. ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager in Canada

Launched in 2013, Natural Resource Canada's Canadian adaptation of Portfolio Manager includes the following features to facilitate the Canadian user experience:

- Canadian site and source energy
- Canadian greenhouse gas emissions factors
- Canadian 1-100 ENERGY STAR scores for several building types
- Median source and site energy use intensities for more than 80 building types, including ones not getting a score
- Enhanced Canadian weather data (more than 150 Canadian weather stations) and automatic selection of the closest weather station, based on the postal code of the building
- Metric units
- Bilingual user interface
- [Web services](#) for Canadian buildings
- The U.S. EPA's [Target Finder](#) calculator

1.4. ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager and BOMA BEST®

Users of the BOMA BEST® Online Portal will have the option to sync their BOMA BEST® data collection page with an existing account in ESPM. In all cases, regardless of whether or not a building is synced, the metrics that need to be reported in the BOMA BEST® Questionnaire (Energy Use Intensity, Water Use Intensity, and ENERGY STAR Score) will be calculated automatically and provided in the BOMA BEST® Online Portal using the ESPM methodology.



2. Rewarding performance in BOMA BEST®

2.1. What metrics are required in order to obtain points for performance in BOMA BEST®?

For **Office** buildings, a performance score is provided based on the following metrics: ENERGY STAR Score and Water Use Intensity (WUI). Although points are not awarded based on the value, users are also asked to provide the Weather-normalized Site Energy Use Intensity (EUI).

For **Universal** buildings, a performance score is provided based on the ENERGY STAR Score (if available to the building type). Although points are not awarded based on the value, users are also asked to provide the building's Weather-normalized Site EUI and WUI.

For **Multi-Unit Residential Buildings** and **Health Care** facilities, a performance score is provided based on the following metrics: Weather-normalized Site EUI and WUI.

In **Enclosed Shopping Centres**, **Light Industrial**, and **Open Air Retail** points are awarded for obtaining a Weather-normalized Site EUI and WUI, regardless of the value.

3. Energy Use Intensity

3.1. What is an EUI?

EUI stands for Energy Use Intensity. It is the energy use per square foot at a property (energy divided by square foot). EUI enables you to compare different sized buildings.

3.2. What is a weather-normalized EUI and why is it different?

Weather normalized energy is the energy your building would have used under average weather conditions. The weather in a given year may be much hotter or colder than average; weather normalized energy accounts for this difference. If your weather normalized EUI is the same as your source EUI, it probably means your property does not exhibit a relationship between temperature and energy.

Benchmarking in BOMA BEST® is based on the weather-normalized EUI.

3.3. What is the difference between source and Site EUI and which one should I use?

Site EUI is the same as energy use intensity described above. When someone says EUI, they mean site EUI. Source energy represents the total amount of raw fuel that is required to operate the building. It incorporates all transmission, delivery, and production losses. By taking all energy use into account, the source EUI provides a complete assessment of energy efficiency in a building.

Benchmarking in BOMA BEST® is based on the site (weather-normalized) EUI.

3.4. What information is required to obtain an EUI?

A weather-normalized site EUI can only be calculated if sufficient information is provided (either directly in the BOMA BEST® Portal or in the building's synched ESMP account).

1. **Building Type:** On the "Create New" you are asked to identify the ENERGY STAR compatible building type for your building. This will be similar to your Questionnaire Type but will be more specific. There are over 80 property types which can be entered into ESPM. Building types are listed [here](#). Click on the category that best describes how the majority of your building functions. From there, you'll see the available property types within each category,



how they're defined, and what data you'll have to enter to successfully benchmark your building in Portfolio Manager. If your property doesn't fit neatly into one of the property types in Portfolio Manager, pick the closest one. If it just doesn't fit into any of the categories, enter it as "Other."

2. **Identifying Space Types (Property Uses):** In general, EPA recommends you enter as few Property Uses as possible. You should enter one Property Use (e.g. Office), and include the Gross Floor Area (GFA) and energy of any amenities included in the building (such as a restaurant, health club, and dry cleaner) within this single Office Property Use. You would also include the Property Use Details (Number of Workers, Computers, etc.) from the restaurant, health club and dry cleaner with the Office Property Use. There are 4 exceptions to this rule when you should create a separate Property Use:
 - If it is a [Property Use Type that can get an ENERGY STAR Score](#) (note: Retail can only get a score if it is greater than 5,000 square feet)
 - If it accounts for more than 25% of the property's GFA
 - If it is a vacant/unoccupied Office
 - If the Hours of Operation differ by more than 10 hours from the main Property Use
3. **Energy consumption data:** Provide energy consumption representing all spaces within the building including offices, conference rooms and auditoriums, break rooms, kitchens, lobbies, fitness areas, basements, storage areas, stairways, and elevator shafts.

At a minimum you will need energy (e.g., electricity and natural gas) data for a 12-month period.

4. **Gross Floor Area:** Provide the Gross Floor Area (GFA) representative of the energy consumption or water consumption data you are entering. The GFA must include the following spaces:
 - Lobbies
 - Tenant Areas
 - Common Areas
 - Meeting Rooms
 - Break Rooms
 - Atriums (ground floor only)
 - Restrooms
 - Elevator Shafts
 - Stairwells
 - Mechanical Equipment Areas
 - Basements
 - Storage Rooms

The following spaces must not be included in the GFA:

- Exterior spaces
- Balconies
- Patios
- Exterior Loading Docks
- Driveways



- Covered Walkways
- Outdoor Courts (Tennis, Basketball, etc.)
- The interstitial plenum space between floors (which house pipes and ventilation)
- Crawl Spaces
- Parking (indoor or outdoor)

Enter this value in the “Fill in more Details” section of the “Create New” page on the BOMA BEST® Portal.

3.5. I’ve entered my data – why can’t I obtain a EUI?

If you are using ESPM (not the BOMA BEST® portal), whenever a metric is “Not Available” you can click on the words “Not Available” to receive a detailed explanation. These messages will contain links to help you quickly fix the problem. Or, sometimes there may not be a fix because a particular metric is just not available for your property type, and then there will be information about what you can use instead.

[Data Quality Checker](#) – The Data Quality Checker allows you to screen any selected time period and find a list of possible errors. It will scan for incomplete data and look at metrics like Source EUI, Number of Workers (compared to your Gross Floor Area), and Weekly Operating Hours to see if anything appears out of range relative to your property type.

4. ENERGY STAR Score

4.1. What is an ENERGY STAR Score?

The energy performance of a building is expressed on a 1-to-100 scale — a rating of 50 indicates that the building performs better than 50% of all similar buildings, while a rating of 75 indicates that the building performs better than 75% of all similar buildings.

4.2. What buildings are eligible to obtain an ENERGY STAR Score?

Buildings eligible to obtain an ENERGY STAR Score must meet the following requirements:

1. More than 50% of your building’s gross floor area (excluding parking lots and garages) must be eligible for an ENERGY STAR Score (in Canada the following property use types are eligible: Office, Financial Office, K-12 Schools, Hospitals, Medical Office, Residential Care Facility, Supermarket/Grocery Store)
 - a. Exception 1: You are not eligible to obtain an ENERGY STAR Score if the combined floor area of all enclosed and unenclosed parking structures exceeds the total gross floor area of the building.
 - b. Exception 2: You are not eligible to obtain an ENERGY STAR Score if more than 25% of your floor space is ineligible for a score. The combined floor area of any property use types that do not have an ENERGY STAR score (i.e., types not listed above) can’t exceed 25 percent of your total floor area.
2. The building must be at least 5,000 square feet (465 m²). Financial Offices may be as small as 1,000 square feet.



3. The building must be in operation at least 30 hours per week (does not apply to buildings that are not asked for hours of operation, such as hotels and hospitals, nor does it apply to religious worship facilities).
4. There must be at least 1 worker during the main shift.
5. You must be able to report on all energy used by the property (e.g. electricity, gas, oil, steam, onsite renewable energy, etc.).
6. You must be able to provide at least 12 full consecutive calendar months of energy data for all active meters and all fuel types.

4.3. What additional information is needed to obtain an ENERGY STAR Score?

Typically speaking, you will use the same account to create the EUI, ENERGY STAR Score, and WUI therefore it is not necessary to enter this information again. In any case, the following information is required:

1. **Building Type:** See the description in “3.4 – What information is required to obtain an EUI?”
2. **Identifying Space Types (Property Uses):** See the description in “3.4 – What information is required to obtain an EUI?”
3. **Energy and water consumption data:** See the description in “3.4 – What information is required to obtain an EUI?”
4. **Gross Floor Area:** See the description in “3.4 – What information is required to obtain an EUI?”
5. **Weekly Operating Hours:** Weekly Operating Hours are the number of hours per week that a property (or property-use within a building) is occupied by at least 75% of the tenant employees, and is therefore considered to be operational. These hours often correspond to "lease hours" in a multi-tenant office property. More information about operating hours can be found [here](#).
6. **Number of Workers on Main Shift:** The Number of Workers on Main Shift should reflect the total number of workers present during the primary, or largest shift of the day. This is *not a total count* of workers, but rather a count of workers who are present at the same time. For example, if there are three daily eight hour shifts of 100, 75, and 50 workers respectively, the Number of Workers on Main Shift is 100.

Include these workers: Employees of the property; Part-time employees*; Sub-contractors who are onsite regularly; Volunteers who are onsite regularly.

Don't include these workers: Visitors; Clients; Customers/Patients; Teleworkers.

*Part-time Workers: If you have part-time workers who are present during the primary shift, then you should count them. However, say your main shift is 9:00 am - 5:00 pm, and you have some part-time workers in the morning shift, and some part-time workers in the afternoon shift. You don't want to double count these part-time workers - just count the workers who are present at one time.

What if the "main shift" varies day to day? If your “Workers on Main Shift” is different from the weekdays to the weekends, use the weekday number, since that will be closer to the average. If your “Workers on Main Shift” fluctuates widely over the course of a week, then you can use an average across the days you are open. For example, say you're open 5 days per week: 3 days



you have 100 Workers and 2 days you have 50 Workers. You can report the average of 80 Workers (3 days * 100 Workers + 2 days * 50 workers / 5 days open = 80 Workers on Main Shift).

7. **Parking area information:** You have two options to receive an ENERGY STAR Score for a property with a parking:
- A. Sub-meter your parking and exclude its energy and Gross Floor Area (GFA). (*Recommended*)
1. Do not enter a parking Property Use.
 2. Do not enter the energy for your parking.
 3. If your parking garage *is physically connected* with your building and part of a single structure, then the parking ([Fully or Partially Enclosed](#)) cannot be more than 75% of the total Property GFA. For example, a property that is 100,000 square foot, with 80,000 ft² Parking and 20,000 ft² Office is considered a Parking Garage by EPA and is not permitted to earn ENERGY STAR certification. This limit does not apply to Open Parking Lots.
 4. If your parking garage *is not physically connected* to your building, but rather is a separate structure then there is no limit as to its size.
- B. Benchmark your parking with your building and include its energy and GFA.
1. Add a Property Use for your parking.
 - Report the GFA of each type of parking (Fully Enclosed, Partially Enclosed, and Open).
 2. Include all parking energy in your energy meters.
 3. Regardless of physical connection, the GFA of your Parking (Fully Enclosed and Partially Enclosed) cannot account be more than 50% of your total Property GFA.

Why? The ENERGY STAR score provides an assessment of the building, not its parking area. If it is not possible to sub-meter your parking area, then Portfolio Manager will estimate the amount of energy parking uses and subtract that out before calculating your metrics.

4.4. What if my building doesn't receive an ENERGY STAR Score?

Only some building types will receive an ENERGY STAR Score, due to limitations in the national comparative dataset.

However, if the building is one that is eligible for an ENERGY STAR Score in Canada, then errors in data entry have been made or insufficient information has been provided to calculate one. In these cases, users must select "Unable to obtain/Unknown" as the answer option in the BOMA BEST[®] Questionnaire regarding the ENERGY STAR Score. No points can be achieved.

5. Water Use Intensity

5.1. What is a WUI

WUI stands for Water Use Intensity. It is the water use per square foot at a property (water divided by square foot). WUI enables you to compare different sized buildings.



5.2. What information is required to obtain a WUI?

A WUI can only be calculated if sufficient information is provided (either directly in the BOMA BEST® Portal or in the building's synched ESMP account).

1. **Building Type:** See the description in "3.4 – What information is required to obtain an EUI?"
2. **Identifying Space Types (Property Uses):** See the description in "3.4 – What information is required to obtain an EUI?"
3. **Water consumption data:** Provide water consumption representing all spaces within the building including offices, conference rooms and auditoriums, break rooms, kitchens, restrooms, lobbies, fitness areas, basements, storage areas, stairways, and elevator shafts. At a minimum you will need water (any water used indoors or for irrigation) data for a 12-month period.
4. **Gross Floor Area:** See the description in "3.4 – What information is required to obtain an EUI?"

6. Shared energy or water consumption in multiple buildings

BOMA BEST® has developed its own definition in regards to what constitutes a *single* building (when separate structures can be considered one building and answer only one questionnaire). This will have an impact on the approach used in ESPM. For more details on this, visit the Application Guide.

6.1. What is the definition of a "building" for the purposes of BOMA BEST®?

A *building* is usually free-standing. A free-standing building is one that is not connected to other buildings except only superficially (e.g. a walkway). It may or may not be part of a larger campus of buildings and may share a common mechanical system with other buildings. Each free-standing building must complete its own BOMA BEST® questionnaire and will receive its own certification.

A *building* can also include multiple structures. In certain cases, multiple buildings can be considered a single *building* and complete a single BOMA BEST® assessment for these structures.

In order for multiple buildings (or structures) to be considered a single building and complete only one BOMA BEST® questionnaire, the following three requirements must be met:

1. The buildings must share an actual, physical connection that is complete and indivisible (i.e. a shared functional space that cannot be divided such as underground parking, an atrium, or conference space). Hallways or interior walking paths between buildings are not considered functional, shared space, even if they are lighted and/or heated. This requirement is consistent with the Energy Star Portfolio Manager (ESPM) definition of a "single structure".
2. Buildings must have the same primary use type (75% or more of each building is dedicated to the same use, such as "office").
3. Buildings must be managed by the same management company and share policies.

Aspects that are not taken into consideration in the definition of a single *building*:

- Age of construction of each structure in the building.
- Whether utilities are shared.
- Whether consumption is sub-metered.
- Whether HVAC equipment or other technologies are shared.



6.2. How should I benchmark my building if it is composed of several structures, qualifies as a single building, and where there is no sub-metering?

If there is no sub-metering of the structures within a building (and that together these structures meet the definition of a single building) and where one BOMA BEST[®] questionnaire is being used, follow these steps:

1. Create an account in ESPM for the totality of the space, entering the total area and associated consumption for all structures in the building.
2. Connect this account with the BOMA BEST[®] assessment.
3. Enter the values for ESS, EUI and WUI in the appropriate place in the BOMA BEST[®] survey.

6.3. How should I benchmark my building if it is composed of several structures, qualifies as a single building, and where each structure is sub-metered?

Even if each (or some) structure is sub-metered, only one value for EUI, WUI and ESS can be entered in the single BOMA BEST[®] questionnaire. This value cannot be estimated. It must be generated by the ESPM system. The steps are the same as though there was no sub-metering in the building:

1. Create an account in ESPM for the totality of the space, entering the total area and associated consumption for all structures in the building.
2. Connect this account with the BOMA BEST[®] assessment.
3. Enter the values for ESS, EUI and WUI in the appropriate place in the BOMA BEST[®] survey.

If individual accounts exist for each structure in ESPM already, and if the EUI, WUI or ESS specific to each building is known, you will be invited to enter this detail in the BOMA BEST[®] questionnaire. No additional points are awarded.

6.4. How should I benchmark my building if the utilities are shared with another building yet these do not qualify as a single building in BOMA BEST[®]?

If a free-standing building shares utilities with another building (but together they do not meet the definition for a single *building* in BOMA BEST[®]) and consumption is not sub-metered, connect the building with an ESPM account that represents the shared consumption. Do not enter estimates. Report the ESS, EUI and WUI associated with the shared consumption in the BOMA BEST[®] survey. More than one BOMA BEST[®] survey can be linked to the same ESPM account.

- E.g. Building A and Building B share utilities and are not sub-metered. They do not meet the criteria for a single *building*. Both must complete their own BOMA BEST[®] questionnaire. Both questionnaires should be linked to the same ESPM account that represents the shared consumption and GFA of both Building A and Building B. Both buildings will report the same ESS, EUI and WUI as applicable.

6.5. How should I benchmark my building if it shares the HVAC with another building?

If the free-standing building shares HVAC equipment and systems with another building (but together they do not meet the definition for a single *building* in BOMA BEST[®]), questions about this equipment should be answered as though they were located in the building itself. This means that many buildings



might report on the same equipment – this is acceptable and necessary to understand the efficiency of the equipment serving an individual building.

6.6. Are these guidelines identical to the ones reported by ESPM?

As much as possible, BOMA BEST[®] strives to replicate the requirements from ESPM to avoid confusion. One area where policies do not match is in regards to using a common ESS, EUI or WUI for multiple buildings that do not sub-meter yet are not considered a single structure. BOMA BEST[®] allows users to calculate the ESS, EUI and WUI based on the shared data and apply this value to both buildings. ESPM does not allow this. BOMA Canada decided to proceed in this way because it was considered to be the most straightforward way forward.

7. Miscellaneous questions

7.1. Why isn't it recommended to create many space types?

While it may seem logical and orderly to break out each Property Use separately, it does not increase the accuracy of your score (unless the Property Use Type can get a score). The ENERGY STAR score is typically based on [Commercial Building Energy Consumption Survey \(CBECS\)](#) data, which keeps a building designated as a single type as long as that type accounts for 75% or more. You'll receive the most accurate score if you match this CBECS approach. In fact, even if you enter these Uses separately, Portfolio Manager will add them back together into the Office Property Use before calculating your metrics. Also, entering one Property Use will simplify your property and make trouble shooting errors easier.

7.2. What spaces must be excluded from the consumption data?

The best practice is to include all of a property's Gross Floor Area (GFA) and energy use when benchmarking. However, here are a few examples of energy that may make sense to exclude (provided it is sub-metered) from your property:

- Cell towers
- Parking garages
- Electric vehicle charging stations
- Outdoor, heated pools (note: indoor pools should not be excluded)
- A large billboard or projection screen on a building (or in your parking lot) *when the sign is not related to the use of the building.* (A sign displaying the company's name or anything related to the business SHOULD be counted towards the buildings use.)

You may exclude a Property Use from a building (and for ENERGY STAR certification) if ALL of the following four conditions are met:

- The Property Use must be less than 10% of the building's Gross Floor Area (GFA)
- The Property Use must not be a property type eligible to receive an ENERGY STAR score
- The Property Use must be sub-metered so that both the Property Use's floor area and energy consumption can be excluded
- The Property Use's energy use patterns must be significantly different than those of the rest of the building (ex: A restaurant on the first floor of an office)

If there is a data centre that meets the ESPM definition (see next question), energy dedicated to this space must be excluded.



7.3. What is the accepted definition of a data centre and what should I do if my building has one?

Data Center refers to buildings specifically designed and equipped to meet the needs of high density computing equipment, such as server racks, used for data storage and processing. Typically these facilities require dedicated uninterruptible power supplies and cooling systems. Data center functions may include traditional enterprise services, on-demand enterprise services, high performance computing, internet facilities, and/or hosting facilities.

Often Data Centers are free standing, mission critical computing centers. When a data center is located within a larger building, it will usually have its own power and cooling systems, and require a constant power load of 75 kW or more. Data Center is intended for sophisticated computing and server functions; it should not be used to represent a server closet or computer training area.

Energy consumed specifically to meet the needs of the Data Centre must be excluded from the total data entered into the ESPM or in the BOMA BEST[®] Portal.

You must be able to measure, track, and input the specific amount of energy delivered directly to IT equipment (servers, storage devices, etc.). Measurements must be obtained at the output of the Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) or, in some cases, the input of the Power Distribution Unit (PDU). (<https://portfoliomanager.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/211026638-My-data-center-is-already-sub-metered-Can-I-use-this-for-IT-Energy->).

When setting up the property click the box that your building contains a data centre. Then, when setting up meters, include an IT Energy Meter and enter your energy data.

7.4. Do I include my parking garage consumption?

When parking is part of a building, it does not count towards gross floor area, since Portfolio Manager focuses on the energy use of the actual building interior. For example, if you have a building with 100,000 square feet of office space and 20,000 square feet of parking, you should enter a gross floor area of 100,000 square feet into Portfolio Manager. You may be prompted to enter information on parking area, but it will not count towards your gross floor area.

Standalone parking garages: If you are reporting a standalone parking garage, EPA recommends that you select the “Other” building type when creating the building. Do *not* check off “My building’s energy use includes parking areas.” Instead, just enter the total area of the garage (i.e., including parking) as the area of the building. This will prevent any error messages from coming up as you continue.

You have two options to receive an ENERGY STAR Score for a property with a parking (see section 4.3 for more details):

1. Sub-meter your parking and exclude its energy and Gross Floor Area (*Recommended*)
2. Benchmark your parking with your building and include its energy and GFA.

7.5. How can I obtain an EUI if I don’t know my tenant’s energy consumption?

In certain asset classes (like Open Air Retail or Enclosed Shopping Centres), the building manager might not have access to 100% of the energy consumption for the tenant spaces. Although this is preferred it is not required in order to obtain a valid EUI for the purposes of BOMA BEST[®] Sustainable Buildings.

If you cannot provide 100% of the energy consumption information for your building, simply enter the data you do have, as well as the known floor area that you know. In the fields provided, indicate for



which areas you are providing the floor area. As long as you are able to enter 12 months of data you will be able to obtain an EUI. Report this EUI in the space provided.

In order to obtain an ENERGY STAR Score, 100% of the data must be reported.

7.6. How can I obtain a WUI if I don't know my tenant's water consumption?

In certain asset classes (like Light Industrial), the building manager might not have access to 100% of the water consumption for the tenant spaces. Although this is preferred it is not required in order to obtain a valid WUI for the purposes of BOMA BEST[®] Sustainable Buildings.

If you cannot provide 100% of the water consumption information for your building, simply enter the data you do have, as well as the known floor area that you know. In the fields provided, indicate for which areas you are providing the floor area. As long as you are able to enter 12 months of data you will be able to obtain a WUI. Report this WUI in the space provided.

7.7. How do I account for my vacant space in my office, bank, financial center, courthouse, or medical office?

If your vacant space is 10% or more of the building's Gross Floor Area (over 12 months), it must be input as a separate Property Use as follows:

- Property Type = Property Type that it would be if it was occupied (Office, Medical Office, etc).
- Weekly Operating Hours = 0
- Workers on Main Shift = 0
- Number of Computers = 0
- Percent Heated and Percent Cooled = Report conditioning as it occurs in the vacant space

7.8. What if I have more questions?

Comprehensive guidelines offered by ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager are available here:

<https://portfoliomanager.zendesk.com/hc/en-us>