



Turning Insights into Impact: How to Implement Your Energy Audit Recommendations

By Kevin Day, PE, CEM, CCP, LEED AP

Energy audits are a powerful tool for identifying inefficiencies and reducing energy costs, yet many clients find themselves overwhelmed by the volume of recommendations and the time commitment required to implement changes. After receiving a comprehensive audit, clients are often left asking: Where do I start? What should I prioritize? Here are some strategies I suggest to help you take meaningful action without feeling daunted by the scope of the findings.

WHY ENERGY AUDITS CAN FEEL OVERWHELMING

Energy audits typically result in a detailed report with numerous recommendations ranging from “low-hanging fruit,” like lighting upgrades, to larger capital-intensive projects, such as replacing entire HVAC systems. While these recommendations can save money and improve sustainability, the time, effort, and resources required to implement them often pose a challenge.

Some common reasons clients feel stuck after receiving audit results include:

Sheer Volume of Recommendations: Initial reports often reveal far more improvement areas than expected, making it hard to prioritize which recommendation to tackle first.

Resource Limitations: Many facility managers feel understaffed and under-resourced, lacking the staff, expertise, or technology to implement recommendations effectively, especially when balancing daily tasks like handling occupant comfort issues.

High Costs and Limited Buy-In: Upfront expenses for energy upgrades often require reallocating funds from budgets outside of operations and maintenance, making it harder to gain stakeholder support and slowing implementation.

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING ENERGY AUDIT RESULTS

To make the most of your energy audit findings, you need a clear and actionable plan. Here are a few key strategies:

1. Focus on Health and Safety First

In some cases, energy audit findings will include deficiencies which directly impact occupant health and safety, requiring ventilation upgrades or improvements to indoor air quality. Prioritizing these items helps mitigate risk

and ensure compliance with safety regulations. Ensuring the well-being of building occupants should always take precedence over other initiatives.

2. Prioritize Low-Cost, High-Impact Actions with Quick Payback Periods

Start by categorizing recommendations based on potential cost savings, energy reduction, and ease of implementation. Focus on “quick wins”—low-cost projects with short payback periods that provide immediate benefits. These rapid-ROI actions, like cleaning coils or optimizing building automation systems, offer early successes and build momentum for more complex upgrades.

3. Develop a Phased Implementation Plan

Once your recommendations are categorized and you’ve tackled those rapid-ROI actions, bundle the remaining projects in several manageable phases. A phased approach can ensure that the most critical or cost-effective improvements are handled first, leaving more complex, time-consuming projects for later. This makes the process less overwhelming and helps allocate budgets more efficiently over time.

4. Capitalize on Incentives and Rebates

Many utility companies, state agencies, and federal programs offer incentives and rebates for implementing energy-saving measures. These programs can significantly reduce the upfront costs of projects like installing energy-efficient lighting or upgrading HVAC systems. Make it a priority to research available incentives to maximize your savings and accelerate payback periods.

5. Reinvest Energy Savings into Future Improvements

Measure and capture the cost savings from initial energy reduction projects and channel these funds into a dedicated budget for future upgrades. By reinvesting these savings, facility managers create a self-sustaining mechanism to fund ongoing energy efficiency improvements, allowing small wins to gradually snowball into larger capital projects without straining the existing budget.

6. Leverage Third-Party Consultants to Lead and Manage Implementation

Appoint an experienced third-party consultant or energy services provider to act as your project champion, overseeing the implementation of energy audit recommendations. These consultants bring specialized expertise and can manage vendor coordination, timelines, and budgets to ensure projects stay on track. This approach eases the burden on internal teams and accelerates the timeline for realizing energy savings.

CONCLUSION: DON'T LET THE AUDIT COLLECT DUST

Energy audits provide valuable insights, but their true impact comes from taking action. By prioritizing health and safety, focusing on low-cost, high-impact improvements, and leveraging incentives, facility managers can drive energy savings strategically. A phased approach, supported by third-party experts, streamlines implementation, allowing facility teams to achieve meaningful, lasting results that align with budgets and operational goals.

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