

Ready for 100 Action Plan

Background and Purpose

The Bucks County Commissioners voted in the spring of 2021 to adopt the Sierra Club's Ready for 100 resolution. The RF100 resolution pledges governments to improve their operations and adopt policies which will limit their use of fossil fuels and eventually eliminate their carbon footprint. To discuss and decide on the most effective ways of maximizing energy efficiency at County facilities and minimizing any negative impacts the County has on the environment the County formed the Ready for 100 Committee.

The committee was made up of leaders from different departments and agencies across county government and met several times to develop an action plan which would identify initial steps that should be taken by Bucks County to achieve the RF100 goal. Committee members discuss these initial ideas and eventually ranked the in order presented below. Rankings are based on level of impact the step could have, level of difficulty in initiating the step and potential costs involved. In the coming months, the committee will develop and begin specific measures and policies to put the steps of this action plan into motion. The committee will meet periodically to review the progress of the steps, discuss possible adjustments to the overall action plan based on that progress, and possibly develop additional steps which may be taken.

Committee Members

Kris Ballerini - Bucks County Treasurer and Director of Tax Claims

Mike Bannon – Director, Consumer Protection/Weights and Measures

Dave Boscola – Bucks County Chief Financial Officer

Bernard Griggs - Bucks County Project and Diversity Officer

Eric Nagy - Bucks County Director of Policy and Projects

John Regula – Bucks County Chief Information Officer

Lauren Smith – Director, Bucks County Human Resources

Kevin Spencer – Director of Operations, Bucks County General Services

Evan Stone - Director, Bucks County Planning Commission

Hon. Jordan Yeager – Judge, Bucks County Court of Common Pleas

Bob Harvie - -Bucks County Commissioner

Action Items

The Action Items below are listed in order based on the Committee's rankings. They include Action Steps which can be taken to achieve the goal for that item. The Action Steps listed are ideas raised by the committee and should not be viewed as the only steps recommended.

1. Educate the workforce about the need to turn off monitors and electronics overnight and on weekends, and on efficient ways to use copiers and printers.

Goal: Through education, enable employees to understand the effect they can have on energy usage every day.

Action Steps

- Unplug devices not in use, i.e.- keurigs and coffee makers.
- Unplug charging bricks, and/or power off surge strips every night and on weekends.
- Education about when devices need to be plugged in. i.e. - laptops don't have to stay plugged in all the time.
- Use reminder emails and messages on hallway monitors about powering off devices.
- Include information about energy saving steps when onboarding new employees.

2. Explore the possibility of purchasing more renewable energy through our energy provider.

Goal: To determine what options the County has to use less fossil fuels by selecting more sustainable sources for electricity used by the County.

Action Steps

- Communicate with our existing energy broker to learn more about sustainable options.
- Purchase Renewable Energy Credits (RECs).
- Plan for future contracts with energy providers and brokers to ensure alternative energy options are available.

3. Actively pursue grant opportunities for energy conservation and alternative energy.

Goal: Expand scope and scale of the potential steps the County can take by finding alternative sources of funding.

Action Steps

- Direct the County grant writer to research and pursue appropriate grants.
- Develop partnerships with other entities to pursue grants together.

4. Work with the Courts to improve the IT infrastructure so that more networked copiers can be used instead of desktop printers.

Goal: Save energy and conserve paper through collaborative work with the Courts and related departments to increase use of networked printers.

Action Steps

- Review existing IT infrastructure in the Justice Center and make necessary improvements.
- Meet with Court Administration and related offices to discuss ways to improve operations and be more efficient.
- Design a training program to assist staff.
- Develop and implement a plan to maximize efficiency and minimize disruption to operations.

5. Replace desktop printers with networked copiers/printers

Goal: To cut energy costs, and other costs through a transition away from desktop printers and toward networked machines.

Action Steps

- Design a training program for new equipment and computer programs/apps which can be used by staff to replace desktop printers.
- Develop and implement a plan to maximize efficiency and minimize disruption to operations.

6. Revise purchasing and bidding policies to prioritize energy efficiency in vehicles, equipment, building materials, construction projects, etc..

Goal: To improve efficiency and sustainability through the development of policies which place more focus on those desirable traits.

Action Steps

- Review existing bidding and purchasing policies and determine ways to prioritize efficiency and sustainability.
- Create policies which reflect the County's priorities.
- Design training for Department Heads, Row officers and employees who handle purchasing throughout the County.

7. Adjust overnight and weekend lighting in County buildings to cut down on electricity usage.

Goal: Use less energy by adjusting the lighting system in County buildings.

Action Steps

- Develop a system for dimming or shutting off lights at nights and on weekends.
- Create and implement a plan for upgrading all County buildings so the system can be universal.
- Evaluate the conversion of all exterior lighting to photo-electric. Would eliminate need for wiring to lighting locations.

8. Evaluate the possibility of installing solar panels on County properties.

Goal: To explore the possibility of producing some, or all of the County's electricity through solar-powered systems.

Action Steps

- Review the 2021 Solar Feasibility Study produced by ProtoGen and decide if a follow-up study is needed.
- Decide whether or not to pursue County solar projects.
- Review structural integrity of county buildings to evaluate their suitability for solar arrays.
- Develop a plan for County solar which can be implemented quickly once it makes sense to do so.

9. Explore contracting with a firm which will evaluate our energy usage with a goal of saving the County money, part of which will then be used to pay the consultant.

Goal: To work with a professional, experienced firm which could evaluate the County's energy usage.

Action Steps

- Communicate with other governmental entities who may have done similar work to learn more about the process.
- Issue a Request for Proposals to learn more about interested businesses and the costs and potential savings, involved in such a study.
- Decide whether or not to contract with an energy consultant.

10. Alter our thermostat settings by 1 degree. Currently heated to 68 in winter and cooled to 72 in summer. Change to heating setting of 67 in winter and cool to 73 in summer.

Goal: To save energy through less use of the County's HVAC system.

Action Steps

- Educate staff on the energy usage associated with extra equipment like fans or heaters.
- Pilot a thermostat adjustment in one or more offices to gauge energy savings and employee comfort.
- Develop a plan for a more flexible climate control system in areas where one doesn't currently exist.

11. Determine if there are energy savings to be found through more telecommuting.

Goal: Save energy through increased efficiency by having more employees work from home more frequently.

Action Steps

- Conduct a study of existing County office space and properties to determine which, if any, of them could be used in a “hoteling” model.
- Gather data about potential energy savings which can help inform decisions about increased telecommuting.
- Determine if its best to hire an independent consultant to evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of telecommuting.

12. Replace windows in the rotunda of the Administration Building.

Goal: Save energy by replacing original, inefficient windows in the rotunda of the Administration Building.

Action Steps

- Decide whether or not to expedite replacing of windows or allow them to be done later.
- Decide whether tinting should be added to windows in the rotunda.

13. Move the data center to a cloud-based system to save energy.

Goal: Save energy by moving County data to a cloud-based system and away from County-owned servers.

Action Steps

- Determine costs and logistics of migrating to a cloud-based system.
- Decide whether to expedite moving to a cloud-based system to save on energy costs.

14. Inventory the number of microwaves, mini-fridges, space heaters, fans and other “extra” appliances to see if there are too many items being brought in for use by employees.

Goal: Save energy by limiting the number of personal and private appliances used on County property.

Action Steps

- Decide if it is worth doing an inventory to determine how many ancillary appliances/devices are in use.
- Decide on whether the County should coordinate the purchase of energy efficient appliances so as to maximize efficiency while also accommodating employee needs.
- Design education for staff about the energy usage of appliances and the need to conserve energy.