



Boston's Back Bay and Cambridge, MA, Credit: Photo by Pond5, photo/1570666

### Introduction

Between 2012 and 2015, Better Buildings Energy Data Accelerator partners Boston, Cambridge, and Eversource successfully completed an extensive process of stakeholder engagement to enable whole building data access for multi-family and commercial building owners in their jurisdiction. Because of a strong collaboration between the two cities, Cambridge was able to quickly build on the experience Boston had of working with Eversource to deploy a utility solution for local building owners.

The partnership between Boston, Cambridge, and Eversource is a leading example of successfully crafting a whole building data access solution in a collaborative manner.

### Impetus for Energy Data Access

Boston was already working with the utilities to identify opportunities for energy efficiency when the need for streamlined data access arose. During these discussions, the city realized that data access was foundational to many of its policies and decided to pursue streamlined whole-building energy data access.

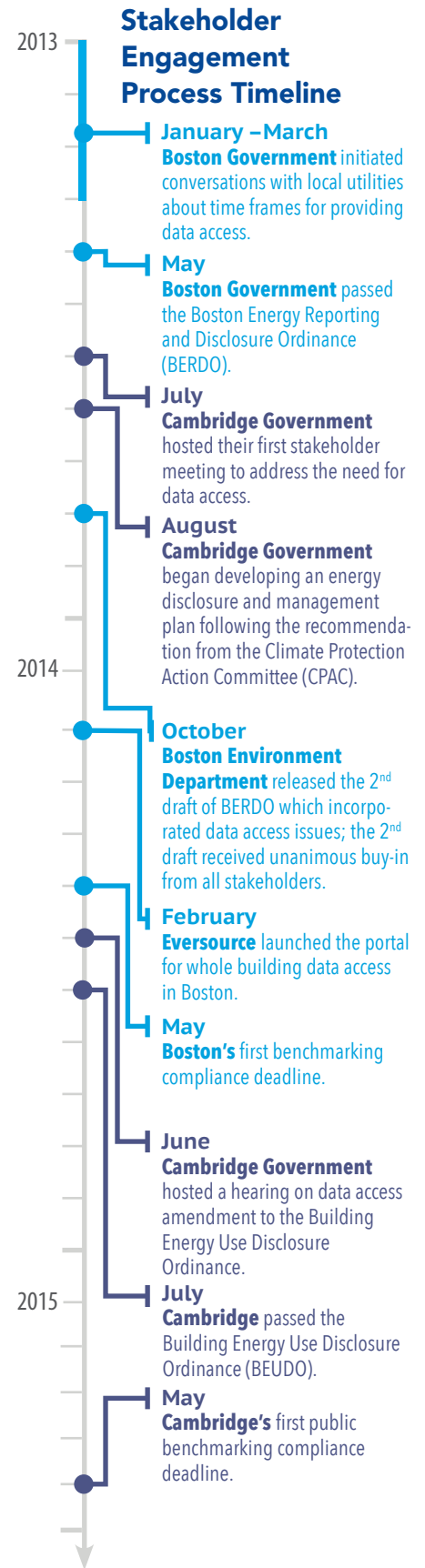
**“Data access is really difficult but it is the backbone for benchmarking analysis. It is hard to evaluate programs when you do not have the data in the first place.”**

— Bronwyn Cooke  
City of Cambridge Sustainability Planner  
2015

utilities to ensure the availability of the tools for the customer to access energy data and comply with the ordinance before the deadline.




In Cambridge, data access was identified as the first step to better understand the various energy profiles of the buildings in the city in order to create adapted energy solutions for building types ranging from multi-family buildings to research centers.

Once each utility realized they wanted whole-building data to drive their respective energy efficiency strategies, they established a timeline with the



## Understanding Major Stakeholders and Their Key Concerns

Eversource signed memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with Boston and Cambridge to facilitate a stronger communication and working relationship. This resulted in a successful collaboration between the main stakeholders which are listed below:

Stakeholders	Key Issues	Solutions
 <p><b>Eversource National Grid (Boston &amp; Cambridge)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Utilities were interested in protecting customer privacy.</li> <li>▶ Utilities differed on aggregation thresholds levels to protect tenant privacy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Boston organized one-on-one conversations with each utility and larger conversations with both utilities and their technical staff to resolve differences in aggregation threshold preferences.</li> <li>▶ The utilities agreed on aggregation threshold of 5 tenants or more.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Large national property owners Ex: Boston Properties inc.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Building owners were concerned about the effectiveness of energy benchmarking tool.</li> <li>▶ Multi-family owners were concerned about system compatibility issues with their current energy management tools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Eversource developed a benchmarking portal as a comprehensive solution to improve overall customer experience and empower them with energy data.</li> <li>▶ Cities required U.S. EPA's ENERGY STAR® Portfolio Manager®, which is the leading tool for energy benchmarking in the U.S.</li> <li>▶ Cambridge and Eversource resolved the compatibility issue through a discussion with a multi-family association to clarify the data access requirements.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Universities Laboratories</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Universities with wide building portfolios historically aggregated energy data differently from the requirement of the city data access effort.</li> <li>▶ Laboratories with high energy use due to their operations were concerned about the metrics used to represent their energy data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Consultations and negotiations convinced the stakeholders of the importance data access at the building level and worked with the city to identify the energy usage per buildings on campus.</li> <li>▶ U.S. EPA's Portfolio Manager offers a specific category for laboratories that allows laboratories to compare their performance to their peers.</li> </ul>

## Determining the Forum for Stakeholder Engagement

Boston and Cambridge were able to approach data access needs with local stakeholders from a unique vantage point since they both had an existing MOU with the utilities to work on energy efficiency. The city of Boston focused its initial conversations to just the utility companies serving the city, Eversource and National Grid, and representatives from the U.S. DOE. In Cambridge, the same stakeholders were engaged as well as the universities when first discussing data access. Once the cities and utilities finalized their data access solutions, they followed a multi-tiered process for engaging other stakeholders:

- ▶ The process started with the release of draft regulations by the Boston Environment Department for which oral comments were heard on November 12, 2013. Written comments were also accepted via email until November 15 2013.
- ▶ Additionally oral comments were collected during phone conversations and meetings with stakeholders. This resulted in a broad participation from various stakeholder such as A Better City (ABC), Medical Academic and Scientific Community Organization (MASCO), Greater Boston Real Estate Board (GBREB).
- ▶ Cambridge similarly collected public comments through a public hearing on June 24, 2014. Many stakeholders were present at the meeting including representatives from U.S. EPA, Boston Properties, Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, NEEP, MIT and Harvard.
- ▶ Eversource provided a utility liaison to work directly in the city office to enhance communication. When issues arose from other stakeholders, this strong working relationship enabled expedient resolution of issues.
- ▶ Cambridge Community Development Department and Boston Green Ribbon Commission group hosted joined training and outreach sessions to ensure the building owners learned how to access their energy data and how to report data accurately.

**“World class cities need a world class policy for data access. That is the way forward.”**

—Boston Properties  
(as told by Cambridge during the interview)

## Energy Data Accelerator

Through the Better Buildings Energy Data Accelerator (EDA), local governments and utilities joined forces to make whole-building energy data access easier for building owners to benchmark their buildings. Over the span of two years, the experiences and best practices discussed and deployed by EDA Partners have been distilled into a toolkit of resources designed to guide local governments, utilities, and other stakeholders that may seek to design a whole-building data access solution in their jurisdictions.