UNIVERUS ENERGY INTELLIGENCE

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The cost of not trusting your utility data

Energy cost, operations, regulation and insurability: why clean, audit-ready utility data is now a portfolio-level priority

For real estate owners, REITs and property & asset managers



AT A GLANCE

The short version

Utility data has moved from the back office to the balance sheet. In 2026 it feeds NOI, budgets, compliance filings, investor benchmarks and the conversations owners have with lenders and insurers. Most portfolios still gather it by hand, and pay for that in ways that rarely show up as a line item.

4.1%
of average CRE net operating income now goes to insurance, up from 1.9% in 2017

90%+
of CRE leaders plan to increase data and technology spending in 2027, up from 76% a year earlier

4.94%
10-year Treasury yield at the end of October 2026, against about 4.1% a year earlier

16
building performance standards are now on the books across the U.S.

Sources: First Street via Bisnow (May 2026); Deloitte 2027 Commercial Real Estate Outlook (Sept 2026); U.S. Treasury daily yield data, October 30, 2026; Institute for Market Transformation, 2026 Building Policies Outlook.

Three takeaways

1. **Utility data is now a financial input, not a reporting by-product.** It feeds NOI, budgets, compliance filings and every conversation with lenders, insurers and investors. With borrowing costs still near multi-year highs, each controllable operating dollar matters more.
2. **Accuracy and traceability matter more than volume.** More dashboards do not help if the underlying bills are incomplete, duplicated or wrong. Investors are now scoring measured performance, and they want to see how each number was produced.
3. **Centralized, automated capture removes the manual burden without adding headcount.** Capture, validation and reporting run continuously across the portfolio, inside clear controls.

Where to start, by role

If you lead…	Your first question is likely to be…	Start with
Asset management	Is utility cost eroding NOI, and can we prove performance to lenders, insurers and investors?	Sections 1, 2 and 6
Property management	Why does month-end still mean chasing bills across dozens of portals?	Sections 3 and 6
Finance and accounting	Can we trust the utility number in the budget, the accrual and the audit file?	Sections 3, 4 and 6

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most portfolios do not have a data problem. They have a trust problem.

Can your team stand behind the utility numbers it reports each month?

How much of your operating budget is being lost to billing errors nobody catches?

Which of your properties face building performance or disclosure deadlines in the next two years?

What would a lender, insurer or investor find if they asked for your consumption history tomorrow?

Read on to find out why these questions matter more as 2026 closes, and what leading owners are doing about them.

Real estate owners have never had more utility data. Bills, meter reads, portal exports and spreadsheets arrive every month from dozens of vendors in dozens of formats. Yet when an asset manager, a lender or an auditor asks a simple question about what a building costs to run, the answer is too often a week of reconciliation and a number nobody fully stands behind.

In 2026 that gap has become expensive. Four forces are converging on the same data: rising energy and operating costs, flat budgets and a higher cost of capital, tightening regulation and investor standards that now reward measured performance, and an insurance market that is pricing physical risk directly into net operating income and asset values. Each asks the same thing of an owner: **prove how your buildings perform, with numbers you can trace back to the source.**

This paper sets out why the stakes have risen, what manual and fragmented utility data really costs, what trusted data looks like, what it means for asset management, property management and finance, and a practical 90-day roadmap.

> *It isn't a shortage of utility data. It's that no one can stand behind it.*
>
> The core challenge for most real estate portfolios in 2026

SECTION 1 · THE LANDSCAPE

Four forces raising the stakes in 2026

None of these forces is new on its own. What has changed is that they now arrive together, and all four depend on the same underlying utility and building data.

Force 1: Energy and operating costs keep climbing

The U.S. Energy Information Administration's October 2026 Short-Term Energy Outlook expects U.S. wholesale electricity prices to average $52 per megawatt-hour this year, 11% more than in 2025, with prices in the PJM market, which serves much of the Mid-Atlantic and Midwest, up 41%. Record summer heat lifted electricity consumption 4% in the third quarter, led by residential and commercial demand, and EIA expects commercial and industrial demand to grow by close to 3% in 2027 as data centres keep adding load. Canada is seeing the same pressure: Alberta alone accounts for about 92% of the country's planned data centre capacity, according to the Information and Communications Technology Council (ICTC).

Fuel markets are tight as well. EIA forecasts Brent crude at about $105 a barrel in the fourth quarter of 2026, which flows through to heating oil, diesel and propane deliveries. For owners, that means utility lines that grow faster than rents in many markets, and less margin for billing errors to go unnoticed.

Force 2: Flat budgets, higher cost of capital

Deloitte's 2027 Commercial Real Estate Outlook, published in late September and based on a June–July 2026 survey of 950 senior leaders at owners and investors with at least US$250 million in assets, found sentiment slipping for a second year: its index fell to 57.8 out of 100, from 64.9 a year earlier. Yet more than 90% of respondents plan to increase data and technology spending next year, up from 76% in the prior survey. Deloitte's central message for 2027 is discipline, including re-underwriting financing and refinancing decisions within the next year using all-in debt costs.

Financing remains expensive. The Federal Reserve held its policy range at 3.75% to 4.00% on October 28, 2026. The 10-year Treasury yield ended October at 4.94%, down from 5.29% at the end of September but well above the roughly 4.1% of a year earlier, and Freddie Mac's 30-year mortgage benchmark averaged 7.24% on October 29, against 6.17% a year ago. Commercial loans do not track mortgage rates exactly, but both follow long-term Treasury yields, and the direction is the same: refinancing costs more. Revenue growth, meanwhile, is modest. Yardi Matrix reports U.S. multifamily advertised rents up just 1.4% year to date through September.

When debt costs more and rents grow slowly, operating expense is the lever owners control most directly, and NOI is the number lenders underwrite. Utility cost that leaks through billing errors now shows up in valuations and loan terms, not just in the budget. Teams are expected to deliver more accuracy and insight without adding people, and automation only pays off on clean data.

The people may not be there to add in any case. ICTC estimates that if Alberta builds 80% of its planned data centre capacity over the next decade, the province alone would be short roughly 5,200 construction and skilled-trades workers, and Deloitte's 2027 outlook notes that 59% of CRE leaders will reach retirement age within a decade. Skilled energy and building talent will be scarcer and more expensive, which makes every hour spent re-keying utility bills harder to justify.

Force 3: Regulation and investor standards are tightening

Building performance standards have moved from a handful of cities to statewide programs. In California, CARB's initial regulation under SB 253 took effect on October 12, 2026, confirming November 10 as the deadline for first-year Scope 1 and 2 emissions reports from companies with more than US$1 billion in revenue doing business in the

state. Limited third-party assurance is proposed from 2027, while enforcement of the companion climate-risk law, SB 261, remains on hold under a court injunction. ISSB standards (IFRS S1 and S2) are becoming the international baseline for investor-grade disclosure.

Federal support is moving the other way. Deloitte notes that certain federal tax benefits for energy-efficient commercial buildings closed to new qualifying activity after June 30, 2026, so more efficiency work will need to be justified by operating savings that owners can measure and defend.

Investor benchmarks are moving toward measured performance. GRESB, whose real estate assessment is used by institutional investors worldwide, has approved its 2028 Real Estate Standards, the first to put its “Road to Performance” into practice. Scoring shifts away from policies and processes toward measured, real-world performance, starting with energy. GRESB frames the goal in plainly financial terms, including efficiency, resilience and a lower cost of capital, and advisers expect the owners best placed for the change to be those with strong data management and clear audit trails. Its 2026 results, released on October 1, benchmarked more than 2,000 real estate entities, and managers reporting improved scores, such as Canada’s GWL Realty Advisors, point to practical steps including expanding utility data coverage.

The tools are changing too. ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager, the benchmarking platform most local laws are written around, is moving from EPA to the Department of Energy under a transition plan released on August 28, 2026, with the full transfer of its systems and databases due by July 2027. Portfolio Manager remains operational, but the transition is a reminder to keep a complete, validated copy of your own data rather than relying on any single external system.

Section 2 maps the 2026 regulatory landscape. The deeper point is operational: every one of these rules and benchmarks runs on complete, accurate energy and utility data.

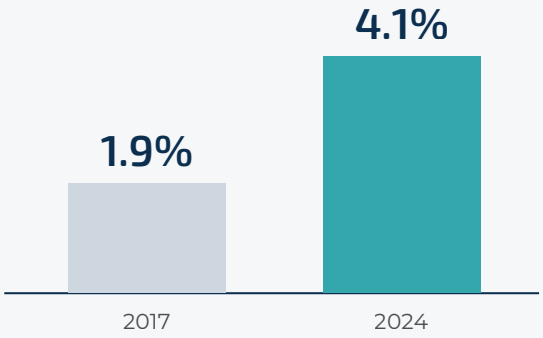
Force 4: Insurance and insurability

This is the force many owners underestimate. Research from First Street, analysing 25 years of NCREIF performance data across 120 U.S. metros, found that commercial property insurance costs grew 154% between 2017 and 2024. Insurance now consumes about 4.1% of average property NOI, up from 1.9% in 2017, and assets in high climate-risk markets trade at values roughly 16.9% below comparable properties in lower-risk markets. First Street’s chief economist has described these as long-term cost resets rather than temporary spikes.

Figure 1

Insurance is taking a growing share of property income

Insurance as a share of average CRE net operating income, 2017 vs 2024



+154%
growth in insurance costs across multifamily, office, industrial and retail, 2017–2024

16.9%
lower values in high climate-risk markets than in comparable lower-risk markets

Source: First Street, *The Climate Premium on Commercial Real Estate Insurance* (2026), analysing NCREIF data across 120 U.S. metros; reported by Bisnow, May 2026.

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The professional community is reaching the same conclusion. At ULI's 2026 Resilience Summit, Spenser Robinson, director of real estate at Central Michigan University, argued that a growing body of evidence shows physical risk to be financially material, and that regulators and markets from California to the ISSB are beginning to treat it that way.

> *"Physical risk is now part of the bundle of risk we evaluate in real estate."*
>
> Spenser Robinson, Central Michigan University, ULI Resilience Summit (Urban Land, June 2026)

The weather is adding urgency. NOAA's Climate Prediction Center reported on October 8, 2026 that the current El Niño continues to strengthen, with a strong-to-very-strong event likely through early 2027 and an 83% chance it will exceed the strength of any El Niño in the record back to 1950. NOAA's winter outlook, issued October 15, favours a wetter season across the South and the East Coast and a milder one across the northern states. Events like this show up first in the utility bill, as unusual consumption, demand peaks and cost spikes, long before they appear in an insurance renewal.

For owners, the practical consequence is that lenders and insurers want evidence, not estimates. A portfolio that can document operating performance (consumption trends, anomalies resolved, equipment condition) gives underwriters something concrete to price.

SECTION 2 · REGULATION

Building performance standards: the 2026 map

The table below summarises where key state and city programs stand as 2026 closes for owners of larger commercial and multifamily buildings. Requirements change often, so owners should confirm thresholds and dates with each jurisdiction.

Figure 2

Where key building performance programs stand in late 2026

Selected state and city programs affecting larger commercial and multifamily buildings

Jurisdiction	Program	Where it stands	Data it depends on
California	SB 253 (corporate GHG reporting); state benchmarking	Initial regulation effective Oct 12, 2026; first Scope 1 and 2 reports due Nov 10, 2026; limited assurance proposed from 2027; SB 261 on hold under injunction	Portfolio energy use by fuel and meter
Washington	Clean Buildings Performance Standard	Tier 1 compliance deadlines began June 1, 2026, phased by building size through 2028	Whole-building energy use intensity (EUI)
Maryland	Building Energy Performance Standards (BEPS)	Annual benchmarking for buildings 35,000+ sq ft; federal preemption challenge dismissed March 2026	Benchmarked energy and emissions data
Colorado	Building Performance Colorado (HB25-1269)	2026 targets made non-binding goals; reporting moved to Nov 1; 2030 targets remain mandatory	Annual benchmarking for 50,000+ sq ft
New York City	Local Law 97	Emissions caps in force; penalties of $268 per tCO_2e over the limit; first compliance reports filed 2026	Annual emissions from metered energy
Washington, DC	BEPS	First compliance cycle closes Dec 31, 2026	EUI or ENERGY STAR score
New Jersey, Massachusetts, Oregon	State and municipal benchmarking and performance programs	Benchmarking active; performance requirements phasing in (e.g. Boston BERDO)	Utility consumption by building

Sources: CARB Initial Regulation (effective Oct 12, 2026) via Sullivan & Cromwell and Cooley (Oct 2026); Facilities Dive BPS tracker (Apr 2026); Washington Dept. of Commerce; Maryland Dept. of the Environment; Colorado Energy Office; NYC Dept. of Buildings; IMT 2026 Building Policies Outlook. Requirements change often; confirm with each jurisdiction.

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What this means for a multi-state portfolio. The metrics differ (energy use intensity in one city, emissions intensity in another) and so do the deadlines. A building that complies in Denver can still fall short in New York. Owners need one consistent, validated dataset that can be reported many ways, for regulators, investor benchmarks and lenders alike, rather than a separate scramble for every filing.

What investors are now asking for

Measured performance, not policies. Asset-level energy and utility data, validated, rather than statements of intent.

Evidence that holds up. A clear audit trail from every reported figure back to the source bill or meter.

Data that informs capital decisions. GRESB's October 2026 research on grid trajectories shows that which upgrade pays off first depends on each building's own energy profile and local grid, so planning starts with trusted asset-level data.

Sources: GRESB strategy announcement (Sept 2026) and October 2026 update; Verco, Aug 2026.

SECTION 3 · OPERATIONS

The hidden cost of fragmented, manual utility data

Utility data is broader than most portfolios treat it. It covers every commodity a property pays for: electricity and natural gas, water and sewer, waste, recycling and organics hauling, delivered fuels such as heating oil, propane and diesel, district steam and chilled water, and the credits and charges from on-site solar and generation. Each arrives from a different vendor, on a different cycle, in a different unit and format.

In most portfolios that data still moves the way it did a decade ago, property by property and commodity by commodity. Site teams log in to vendor portals, download bills, re-key figures into spreadsheets and code them their own way. Electricity and gas usually get attention, while water, waste and fuel invoices often go straight to accounts payable and never reach the utility dataset at all. Each step makes sense locally. Together they leave the owner without a complete portfolio view, consistent controls or anyone accountable for the whole.

The costs rarely appear as a line item, which is exactly why they persist:

- **Commodities that fall outside the process.** Waste, water and delivered-fuel invoices are often paid without being tracked, so cost, consumption and compliance totals are quietly incomplete.
- **Overcharges that go unseen.** Duplicate bills, rate and tariff errors, estimated reads and billing-period overlaps are hard to spot across hundreds of PDFs.
- **Analyst hours spent collecting, not analysing.** Skilled people spend month-end chasing and re-keying instead of finding savings.
- **Late fees and service risk.** Bills that reach the wrong inbox turn into late charges, deposits and, at worst, disconnection notices.
- **Inconsistent coding.** The same charge is booked differently at different properties, so budgets and benchmarks compare unlike with unlike.
- **Leakage at transitions.** Acquisitions, dispositions and tenant changes all require accounts to be opened, transferred or closed. Without one owner, some are missed.
- **Under-recovered costs and audit exposure.** Inconsistent data slows tenant recoveries, and when a figure is questioned there is no clear trail back to the bill.

Every commodity is its own data problem. Bringing them into one validated dataset means handling each one's billing quirks, units and failure points.

Figure 3

Every commodity is a different data problem

How common commodities are billed, and where errors and gaps tend to hide

Commodity	How it is typically billed	Where errors and gaps hide
Electricity	Utility delivery bill, often plus a separate retail supply bill in deregulated markets; kWh, kW demand, time-of-use rates	Demand and rate-class errors, estimated reads, supply and delivery bills that don't reconcile
Natural gas	Local distribution company, sometimes plus a gas marketer; therms, CCF or m^3	Estimated reads, unit-conversion errors, transport and balancing charges
Water and sewer	Municipal utilities, often bi-monthly or quarterly; gallons, CCF or m^3	Leaks hidden by long billing cycles; sewer charged on irrigation or cooling-tower water
Waste, recycling and organics	Private haulers and municipal services; lifts, pulls, tons, container size	Contamination and overage fees, extra pickups, fuel surcharges, service still billed at vacant or sold sites
Delivered fuels	Heating oil, propane and diesel delivery tickets and invoices; gallons or litres	No meter to check against, price varies per delivery, invoices often paid outside the utility process
District steam and chilled water	District energy providers; lbs, MMBtu or ton-hours	Complex tariffs and conversions; hard to compare with on-site systems
On-site solar, generation and EV charging	Net-metering credits, PPA invoices, generation and charger data	Credits not reconciled, net usage reported as gross, generation never captured

Source: Univerus Energy Intelligence. Billing structures and units vary by market and vendor.

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What it adds up to

To make this concrete, consider an illustrative mid-market portfolio. The assumptions are deliberately conservative, so adjust them to your own.

Figure 4

What manual utility data can cost a 25-property portfolio

Illustrative annual value at stake for a multi-state portfolio with about $5 million in utility spend

Cost driver	Illustrative assumption	Annual value at stake
Portfolio profile	25 properties in 6 states; about 300 accounts across electricity, gas, water, sewer and waste; about 3,600 bills a year; about $5 million in annual utility spend	Baseline
Manual handling	About 15 minutes per bill to retrieve, key, code and reconcile, at a $60 hourly loaded cost	About 900 hours, or roughly $54,000
Unrecovered billing errors	1% to 2% of utility spend overbilled and never caught	$50,000 to $100,000
Late fees and deposits	2% of bills paid late, at an average of $50 each	About $3,600
Total value at stake	**Before reporting time, compliance risk or tenant recoveries**	**About $108,000 to $158,000 a year**

Illustrative estimate based on the assumptions shown. Not a guarantee of savings. Model your own portfolio with the free savings calculator at univerusei.com/savings-calculator.

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The precise figure matters less than its shape. Even on cautious assumptions, the cost of handling utility data by hand is comparable to a senior analyst's salary, and most of it is invisible because it is spread across site teams, accounts payable and month-end. At today's borrowing costs, every dollar of that leakage also carries through to NOI and the value lenders place on it.

Centralize first

The fix starts with the operating model, not the software. Centralizing does not mean moving every task to head office. It means one system of record, one set of rules and one accountable team, with site teams still close to their buildings.

Figure 5

Five elements of a centralized utility program

What each element means in practice, and why it matters to owners

Element	What it means	Why it matters
One account inventory	Every account, meter and vendor, for every commodity, mapped to a property and an owner	Nothing is missed when properties are bought, sold or re-tenanted
One process	Bills captured, validated and approved the same way at every property	Controls hold regardless of who is on site or on leave
One coding standard	Consistent general-ledger and commodity coding across the portfolio	Budgets, benchmarks and recoveries compare like with like
One view	Portfolio dashboards with drill-down to the property, meter and original bill	Leaders see cost and consumption trends without waiting for month-end
Connected systems	Validated data flows to property management, accounting, ENERGY STAR and BI tools	Each team works from the same numbers, without re-keying

Source: Univerus Energy Intelligence.

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Measures worth tracking

- Share of utility spend captured in the system, by commodity
- Share of bills captured and validated before their due date
- Late fees and service interruptions, by property and month
- Open exceptions (missing, duplicate or anomalous bills) and time to resolve them
- Recovered or credited overcharges, and days to close utility reporting at month-end

SECTION 4 · THE STANDARD

What trusted utility data looks like

“Trusted” is not a feeling. It can be defined and tested. We use three tests: **completeness** (every account, every bill, every period), **accuracy** (validated against expected usage, rates and history) and **traceability** (every reported number links back to its source document). The maturity model below shows how most portfolios progress.

Figure 6

The utility-data maturity model

How portfolios progress from manual collection to intelligence-led decisions

Stage	How data moves	What the team experiences	Where it leaves the owner
1. Manual	Portal logins, PDF downloads, re-keying into spreadsheets	Month-end fire drills; errors found late or never	Reactive; exposed when numbers are questioned
2. Partially automated	Some bill feeds or a bill-pay service; validation still manual	Faster collection, but trust still depends on spot checks	Better visibility, inconsistent confidence
3. Validated and integrated	Automated capture, rules-based validation, human review of exceptions, full audit trail	Analysts work on savings and anomalies, not data entry	One trusted source for finance, operations, compliance, lenders and investors
4. Intelligence-led	Validated data feeds forecasting, benchmarking, capital and risk planning	Decisions made on current data, across the portfolio	Cost control and resilience as a standing capability

Source: Univerus Energy Intelligence.

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What separates stage 3 from the rest is simple to state: validation happens before analysis, people review only the exceptions the system cannot resolve, every figure traces back to its source bill, and clean data flows into the systems teams already use.

Governance before automation

Automation is not a shortcut around this. Applied to inconsistent processes and unvalidated data, it simply produces wrong numbers faster. The portfolios that get real value from AI and automation set the controls first: who owns each account, which rules a bill must pass, which exceptions need a person to approve them, and how every figure is traced to its source. Then they automate inside those controls.

The industry is only partway there. Deloitte's 2027 survey found that while 72% of CRE organisations have completed preliminary data mapping and source verification for their AI systems, fewer than half have implemented more advanced process and security controls. That is also the discipline lenders, auditors and investor benchmarks increasingly expect. When someone asks how a number was produced, the answer should be a record, not a recollection.

What to look for in a platform

If you are evaluating technology to reach stage 3, these are the capabilities that separate a finished outcome from another data feed.

Every acquisition path. Vendor portals, EDI, APIs, email and file delivery, plus managed retrieval or simple upload for small vendors that offer none.

Any commodity, any unit. Electricity through waste hauling and delivered fuel, multiple commodities on one bill, and built-in unit conversion.

Validation before posting. A library of standard tests (zero usage, spikes, duplicates, missing bills, date gaps) with thresholds you can set by account or group, and missing values flagged rather than silently filled.

Traceability. Every figure linked to its source document, with edits, voids and approvals logged.

Finance-ready outputs. AP and GL files in your own coding, accruals for bills that arrive late, and tenant re-billing allocations.

Open connections and data you own. ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager, property management, accounting and BI tools, and a full export of your data in a non-proprietary format.

SECTION 5 · CASE IN BRIEF

In practice: a multi-state retail portfolio

A U.S. real estate operator managing a portfolio of grocery-anchored and open-air retail centres across eight states was handling energy, water, waste and sewer bills manually for roughly two dozen properties. Month-end meant chasing bills across vendor portals, re-keying data and reconciling across providers, with little time left to look for errors or savings.

90%	$150K+	6–8 wks
reduction in manual utility-data workload	in annual savings identified	from kickoff to live, delivered remotely

The approach. Univerus Energy Intelligence automated bill retrieval from vendor portals, used AI extraction to capture consumption, peak usage and cost data, and validated every bill on arrival, flagging missing invoices, duplicates and date gaps. Clean data fed portfolio dashboards and ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager automatically, with a full audit trail behind every number.

The outcome. The property management team stopped re-keying bills and started acting on anomalies. Finance gained one consistent view of utility cost and consumption across the portfolio, and benchmarking and compliance reporting became a by-product of clean operational data rather than a separate project. New properties are added as the portfolio grows.

Client name withheld at the client's request.

SECTION 6 · FOR THE BUYING COMMITTEE

What this means for your role

Trusted utility data is not one team's project. It changes the work of everyone who touches the number, and each role tends to feel the problem from a different angle.

Asset management

VP or SVP of Asset Management; Director of Asset Management

Is utility cost quietly eroding NOI, and can I prove performance to lenders, insurers and investors?

WHAT CHANGES

- A portfolio-wide view of cost and consumption, by asset
- Billing errors and anomalies caught before they reach NOI
- Audit-ready history for refinancing, insurance renewals and sales
- Measured, traceable performance for investor benchmarks
- Compliance exposure mapped by state and city

Start with: Sections 1 and 2

Property management

Regional Director or VP of Property Management; Director of Operations

Why does month-end still mean chasing bills across dozens of portals?

WHAT CHANGES

- No more portal logins or re-keying
- Missing, duplicate and unusual bills arrive as action items
- Account checklists for acquisitions, sales and tenant changes
- Cleaner, faster tenant bill-backs

Start with: Sections 3 and 5

Finance & accounting

CFO; VP Finance; Controller

Can I trust the utility number in the budget, the accrual and the audit file?

WHAT CHANGES

- Consistent coding across every property
- On-time payment, fewer late fees and deposits
- Budgets and accruals built on validated actuals
- A clear trail from every figure to the original bill

Start with: Sections 3 and 4

SECTION 7 · GETTING STARTED

A 90-day roadmap

You do not need a multi-year program to move from stage 1 to stage 3. Automated capture and validation can typically be live within six to eight weeks, and a focused 90 days is enough to build the foundation, prove the value against your current process and extend it across the portfolio. The plan below sets out specific actions, who owns them and what you should have at the end of each phase.

DAYS 1–30 See the whole picture

Know every account, every vendor and every commodity you pay for, and agree how success will be measured.

When	Action

Week 1	Name an executive sponsor (asset management or finance) and one accountable program owner. Agree four or five success measures and record today's baseline: bills per month, late fees, days to close utility reporting, known errors.	Sponsor
Weeks 1–2	Pull 12 months of utility payments from accounts payable, by vendor and GL code. This surfaces every vendor actually being paid, including waste haulers, water authorities and fuel suppliers outside the energy team's view.	Finance / AP
Weeks 2–3	Build one account inventory: a row per account and meter with property, commodity, vendor, account number, billing cycle, delivery method (portal, e-bill, EDI, paper), payer and tenant-recovery status. Reconcile it against the AP list to find accounts paid but not tracked, and accounts still open at sold or vacant sites.	Program owner
Weeks 2–3	Gather portal credentials into a secure shared vault, switch paper bills to electronic delivery wherever vendors allow, and set one central address and inbox for every bill.	Property teams
Week 3	Agree the coding standard: GL and commodity codes, units, cost categories (supply, delivery, demand, taxes, fees, penalties) and which charges are recoverable from tenants.	Finance
Week 4	Map exposure by property: building performance and benchmarking deadlines by jurisdiction, ENERGY STAR property IDs, and the lender, insurer and investor reporting your utility data now feeds.	Asset management

By day 30 you have: A reconciled account inventory across every commodity, a coding standard, a compliance and reporting calendar, and a measured baseline.

DAYS 31–60 Prove the value

Run the new process on a representative group of properties and measure it against what the manual process caught.

When	Action	
Week 5	Choose a pilot of five to eight properties that spans states, asset types and at least four commodities, including one that is usually messy, such as waste or delivered fuel.	Program owner
Weeks 5–6	Load 12 to 24 months of bill history for the pilot properties so every new bill can be validated against its own baseline.	Platform partner
Week 6	Set the controls before switching anything on: variance and dollar thresholds by account or group, who approves which exceptions, and target turnaround times.	Program owner + Finance
Weeks 6–7	Turn on automated acquisition (portal retrieval, e-bill, EDI, email) and a simple upload path for vendors without electronic bills. Confirm every pilot account is reporting.	Platform partner + Property teams
Weeks 7–8	Run in parallel with the existing process for at least one full billing cycle. Compare missing and duplicate bills found, rate and demand errors, late fees avoided and staff hours spent.	Program owner
Week 8	Raise recovery claims with vendors for confirmed overbilling and start a recovery log. Tune thresholds that produced too many or too few exceptions.	Property teams + AP

By day 60 you have: A pilot scorecard comparing manual and automated results, a recovery log, and validation rules tuned to your portfolio.

DAYS 61–90 Scale and connect

Extend the program to the full portfolio, connect it to the systems teams already use and make it part of the operating rhythm.

When	Action	
Weeks 9–11	Onboard the remaining properties in waves by region or vendor, highest spend first, loading history for each wave.	Platform partner
Weeks 9–11	Connect the outputs: an AP/GL file in your coding, month-end accruals for late bills, the ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager feed, tenant re-billing allocations, and your BI or property management system.	Finance + IT
Week 11	Add an account checklist to every acquisition, disposition and tenant change: accounts opened, transferred or closed within an agreed number of days, final reads taken and deposits recovered.	Asset + Property management
Week 12	Set the operating rhythm: a weekly 30-minute exception review, a monthly portfolio cost and consumption review, and a quarterly compliance and reporting check.	Program owner
Week 13	Publish the first portfolio dashboard and month-end utility report, and report the program measures against the day-one baseline to the sponsor.	Sponsor

By day 90 you have: The full portfolio live across every commodity, connected systems, a standing review cadence and a before-and-after view of the program.

What good looks like at day 90

- Every account, meter and vendor, for every commodity, in one inventory with a named owner
- Bills captured and validated before they are due, with exceptions routed to the right person
- Month-end utility reporting produced from one dataset, not reconciled from many
- A documented trail from every reported figure back to its source bill
- A measured baseline, so savings and recoveries can be shown rather than estimated

Five questions to ask your team this quarter

1. How many utility accounts do we have across the portfolio, and how confident are we in that number?
2. When did we last find a billing error, and how did we find it?
3. How long does month-end utility reporting take, and who is accountable for it across the portfolio?
4. Which properties face building performance, disclosure or investor-benchmark requirements in the next 24 months?
5. If a lender, insurer or investor asked for three years of consumption history tomorrow, could we provide it, and stand behind it?

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18. Worked-example figures are illustrative, based on the assumptions shown, and are not a guarantee of savings.
19. Case-in-brief figures are drawn from a Univerus Energy Intelligence client engagement; the client is anonymised.

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