

# *A step-by-step guide to implementing a Lights Out program at your institution*

Thank you for the interest in starting a Lights Out Program! Environmental behavior change campaigns such as Lights Out are critical in building a more sustainable future into the fabric of our society — starting with young people! This event simply asks students to set aside a small amount of time to go turn off lights at campus buildings. At the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illini Lights Out has grown tremendously over the last three years and has made a large impact not only on saving energy around campus (more than 11 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>), but also changing the behavior of students — we asked them! Please use this guide to follow along and learn about what you can do to make the same positive impact at your school.



Pro-Tip: create your own logo to get brand recognition! We've used this logo for free stickers, t-shirts, and mugs!



## Step 1: Laying the Groundwork

### Meeting Place and Event Coordinators:

Designate two to four people to run the events. These people will be responsible for making sure everything goes smoothly, setting up beforehand, cleaning up afterward, and telling participants what your program is all about. They will also serve as the point of virtual communication to volunteers and interested groups or students.

Figure out a meeting place that you can come back to without conflict at future events — with enough space for participants and your event runners. Choose a place that is recognizable on campus so students can find it. It should have space for a growing number of volunteers — U of I events see participation anywhere from 30 to 150 people!

Try to find a meeting place with a table your event runners can sit behind and a table or place for you to put any sort of incentives you decide to give out (candy, pizza, freebies, etc.).



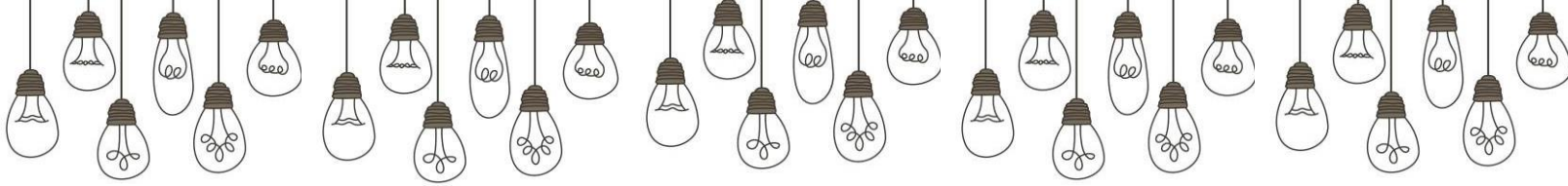
### Find buildings:

Find buildings that you can run your program in. Try to keep it to buildings that the general population of campus will know rather than buildings for professors or administration.

Make sure you choose buildings without too many labs or studios; turning lights off in these rooms could pose a risk to experiments, studies, or projects.

Before your event, write the building name at the bottom of each data sheet you give to students. This makes assigning buildings easier and lets students remember where to go. If possible, plan to have extra buildings to assign so you won't have to scramble to find more last minute.

**Pro-Tip:** It is important to have an email set up for inquiries and all things Lights Out. Give all event runners access to the email so they can answer any questions regarding the program. Advertise this email as part of your program and make the name something simple (ours is [illinilights@gmail.com](mailto:illinilights@gmail.com)).



### Gather Student Interest:

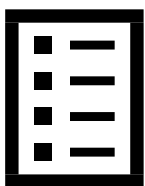
Social media — Advertise your event and the dates on any form of social media – we use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and even Snapchat. Create a Facebook group/event page and invite everyone you know. If you need help with this, feel free to check out the Illini Lights Out page for reference: <https://www.facebook.com/events/349307625891013/>.

Contacting student organizations — Lights Out events are a great way to service the campus community (and the environment). Offer one or two service hours that student organizations such as Greek life and service clubs often require. Contact the heads of groups or people you know in them to spread the word (don't forget environmental- and sustainability-related groups!). Service hours have proved to be a powerful incentive for our students.

Make a Google form — A signup form allows participants to provide their name, email address, snack/drink preferences, and can also note that they can bring a friend or their student group. Having an idea of who's coming will help you prepare snacks, buildings, etc. Email participants a reminder a few days before an event!

Fliers — While putting up fliers might not be the most effective way to gather student attention, it is always good to get your brand out there. Have a PDF copy that you can send out to interested parties.

Incentives — Incentives are a powerful way to get people to attend a Lights Out event — and to keep them coming to behavior change campaigns like this. In the past, Illini Lights Out events have offered pizza, candy, snacks, stickers, thermoses, T-shirts, and pins. Have fun with it, and ask volunteers what they think about your incentives!



### Data and Attendance Collection:

Create an Excel/Google sheet to track attendance (name/email/affiliated group) and buildings sent out. Having a list of participants gives you people to email about event updates, future events, and spreading the word. It will also help you keep track of what organizations and student groups come so you can continue to ask them to come back in the future.

Create a data collection sheet for participants to use during the event. This should include a spot for building name, bulbs/lights turned off, and simple instructions for volunteers who might be confused as to how you want them to count data.

Create your own and/or use our event-level data collection sheet (Excel/Google) to track your progress in terms of savings, volunteers, and buildings gone to over time.

Need some help? Shoot us an email ([illinilights@gmail.com](mailto:illinilights@gmail.com)) or use the template we provide on the National Lights Out website ([sustainability.illinois.edu/NLO](http://sustainability.illinois.edu/NLO)).



## Step 2: Running the Event



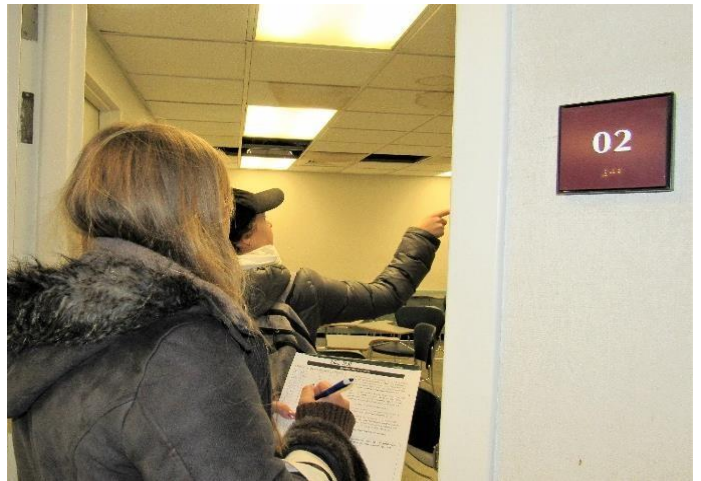
### Introduction:

At the beginning of the event, give a quick overview of what students are there for, such as: “Welcome to the [insert university’s name] Lights Out event! We will be sending you all out in groups of two to five to different buildings around campus to turn off lights and save energy and money. People who have a group can start coming up to receive their building assignments. Yay sustainability!”

### Grouping:

Send two- to five-person groups to buildings. Break up larger groups so more buildings can be covered (unless you are low on buildings).

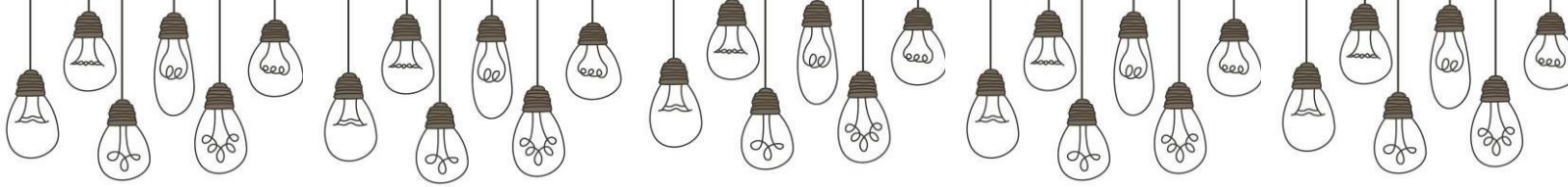
Those who do not already have a group or have a smaller (two-person) group can be grouped up after some of the pre-grouped people get sent out. Let them know what is happening and that they will get sent out as soon as possible. If they don’t like the idea of going with other people, you can always send two-person groups to smaller buildings.



### Taking Attendance:

Have volunteers sign in at the end of the event to encourage people to stay the whole time. It will also make it easier on you as groups will trickle back rather than trying to get everyone to sign in at the same time at the start of the event. This way you can also sign service hour forms or ask if volunteer attendance needs to be sent to a service coordinator or to a student organization.

Pro-Tip: Taking pictures throughout the event is a great way to engage the participants and broadcast how well your event went out to the public later and on social media. Take pictures of groups leaving, turning off lights, and coming back with their clipboards!

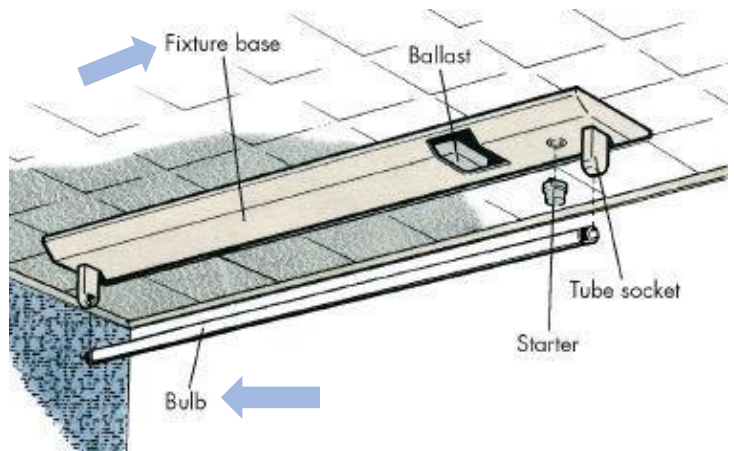


### Participant Interaction and Instruction:

People will ask what they need to do. You can tell them that the data collection sheet has most of what they need to know, but you can relay the following information:

“Once you get to your building, enter classrooms (besides research labs and studios), offices, bathrooms (of your gender), basements, and unused hallways, and write down the room number or room type. Next, count the light fixtures in the room. Then, look at a light fixture and count the bulbs in that one fixture. Write these numbers down in the appropriate columns on your sheet. After you’ve gotten through the whole building, come back and give us your data, sign in, and grab some [snacks, goodies, etc.]”

Pro-Tip: A lot of people get confused with fixtures and bulbs. Show volunteers an example at your meeting place to make sure they count their data right!



Our volunteer (right) is pointing to a light fixture. There are three light fixtures in this photo. This type of fixture usually has two to four long, skinny bulbs in it (see below). So, on the tally sheet, volunteers would write “3” in the fixture column and “2” in the bulb column. Event coordinators will eventually do the math that there are six bulbs in that room. We don’t want to make volunteers do any more math than they want to!



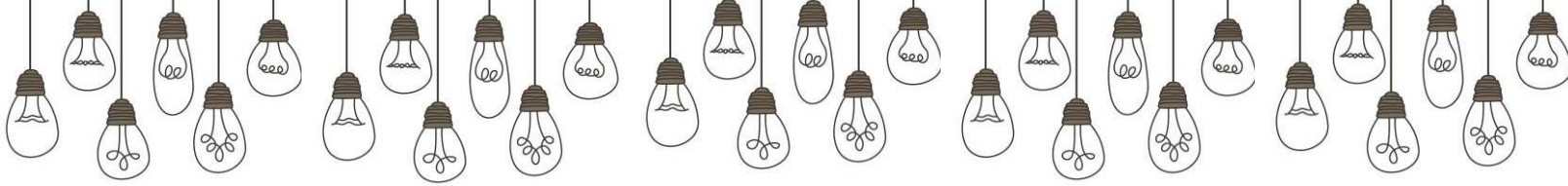
### Final Remarks:

When each group returns, check off that the assigned building is completed so you don’t leave before a group returns. Have the volunteers sign in, ask how it went, and let them know they did a great job in helping promote sustainability on their campus! Point them to snacks or freebies if you have any.

Collect the tally sheets from volunteers and designate one event coordinator to handle the data for consistency purposes. Clean up and prepare for the next event! Make sure to send a thank you email to your volunteers after each event with updates about other sustainability programming and your next Lights Out date!







## Step 3: After the Event



### Crunch Those Numbers:

When you have your volunteer data sheets all collected, you can either add up totals by hand or on Excel/Google sheets. Simply multiply the “fixtures” column by the “bulbs” column to get the number of bulbs in each room. Add them up to get the total number of bulbs (and fixtures, if you’d like) turned off in each building. Do this for every building. Make a Google or Excel sheet to enter all your event, and calculate energy/money saved (see “Logistics” section) from each building and event.

These numbers do not have to be perfect. Feel free to use estimates if the data is hard to read or seems inaccurate.

Have a spot on your spreadsheet for master totals of bulbs, energy, and money saved per building. Also: Have a formula set up to calculate master totals to tell you how much energy you saved over all events, and how many lights you turned off.

This is a lot to take in, we realize! Please feel free to check out our template or email us ([illinilights@gmail.com](mailto:illinilights@gmail.com)) with questions as our master data sheet was a work in progress for about a year. If you have a team member who is familiar with Excel/Google sheets, make this her/his duty!



### Share Your Data, Join the Movement:

On the National Lights Out site ([sustainability.illinois.edu/NLO](http://sustainability.illinois.edu/NLO)), we will have a Google sheet you can use to insert your data totals. This will be a resource to see how other schools are doing, to serve as a point of communication, and to share ideas based on other schools’ data! We hope to track the number of participants you had, buildings you went to, money and energy saved, and total amount of bulbs turned off.

Pro-Tip: Don’t be discouraged by low numbers. It’s good if a group was unable to turn off a ton of lights because that means someone already turned them off! At Illinois, volunteers are seeing fewer lights turned off over time, even with rising volunteer counts. This is a good sign for environmental behavior change!



## Step 4: Logistics / Odds and Ends

### Event Dates:

Host your events on Friday evenings after most classes have been dismissed! This is the sweet spot for saving energy because lights will be assumed to be turned off for the whole weekend until Monday morning — and thus your campus conserves more energy.

Be careful if you choose to host your events on Fridays before breaks, holidays, etc., because this could affect your volunteer turnout.

### Calculating Energy and Money Saved:

Energy — 1.725 kilowatt-hours are saved per bulb per weekend according to our calculations. Contact us if you want to know how we calculated this number. Multiply your “Bulb” number by 1.725 to find the amount of kilowatt-hours of electricity are saved.

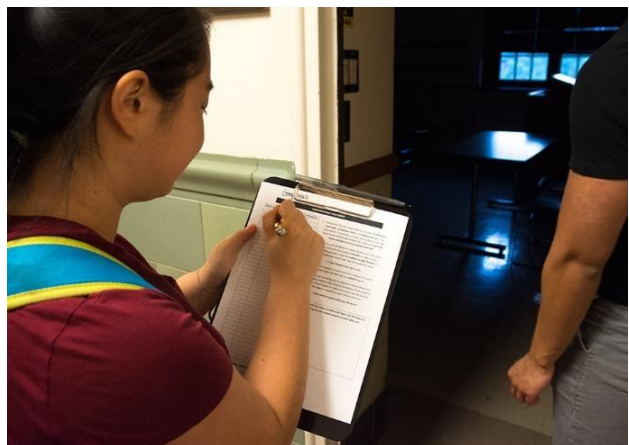
Money Saved — Find your state’s “All Sector” rate (cents saved per kilowatt hour) using [this link](#) (unless otherwise advised by an administrator). Multiply this number by your “Energy Saved” to find total money saved.

Carbon Dioxide — To find how much in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions your event helped avert, enter your total kilowatt-hours of electricity saved into the [EPA’s calculator](#). This will give you a quantifiable number to show how you are helping the planet!

Use the sample data sheet on the National Lights Out website ([sustainability.illinois.edu/NLO](http://sustainability.illinois.edu/NLO)) to get you started!

### Volunteer and Participant Base:

Anyone, even the five people who might come to your first event, reached through a Lights Out event is a positive thing. The U of I program was running for more than a year before we got large numbers of volunteers to come. Keep reaching out to people — service organizations especially — and building your brand! Progress takes time, but any progress is still progress.



**Pro-Tip:** Check with your campus’ security service or administration to make sure running your event is acceptable and to tell them what is going on in case they get a call about students turning off lights!

