




## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and City Council Members

**CC:** Marc A. Ott, City Manager

**FROM:** Larry Weis, General Manager 

**DATE:** February 18, 2014

**SUBJECT:** Final Report on Results of the One-Year Energy Efficiency Stakeholder Process

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### **Executive Summary**

As directed by City Council Resolution No. 20120927-083, Austin Energy (AE) hosted a one-day Energy Efficiency Stakeholder Meeting to encourage community participation regarding energy efficiency goals and strategies as a first step towards a year-long stakeholder process. In addition, a year-long standing item was placed on the Resource Management Commission's meeting agendas to provide stakeholders and Commission members with monthly progress updates and allow public input related to this energy efficiency initiative. This process was coordinated by AE's Customer Energy Solutions (CES) division.

Based on feedback from the first stakeholder meeting, CES decided to hold additional meetings, coordinating a total of five meetings and events throughout the year. The initial meeting on February 9, 2013, addressed a broad array of topics including commercial customer rebates, low and limited income customers, residential energy efficiency, and marketing and outreach efforts. Subsequent meetings were planned in response to the feedback received from stakeholders and meeting attendees. Subsequent meetings varied from a Resource Fair partnering with other City departments to "Rebate Austin!," an event sponsored by the Austin Public Libraries.

Community input was gathered at each meeting and event. There was some consistency across the meetings as well as some new ideas. Details are provided in this report. Participants were clear that there is a need for increased awareness of AE's energy efficiency programs to match the increased interest in the money savings that comes with energy savings.

As AE concluded the one-year process laid out by the resolution, new program ideas are being developed and vetted. We have launched a web-enabled app which allows customers to have access to their daily meter reads and meets the often requested "more energy information." We are exploring an LED program to allow customers an easier and affordable way to increase energy efficiency through quality lighting. We are also investigating new ways to communicate with customers including outreach at our Utility Service Centers and a focused launch of a new PowerSaver website.

While participation in the individual events was lower than anticipated, we are confident that the feedback provided by stakeholders and participants aligns with current AE strategies and programs. As we move forward, we will release additional programs and offerings to meet customers' energy needs.

### **Community Participation and Feedback**

In April 2010, Council set a goal to reduce peak demand by 800 MW by 2020. Throughout the stakeholder process, participants were asked to answer the question "How can Austin Energy meet the 800 MW goal in the most cost-effective manner possible?" Feedback from each event was broad and diverse with some participants providing high-level strategies for the utility and others sharing their individual ways for saving energy.

The following section provides details of each of the five meetings. While attendance was low, the interactions were valuable. The table below provides the participant count by event and includes other details such as dates and locations.

**2013 Energy Efficiency Event Participation Metrics**

	<b>Saturday, Feb 9 9-12pm</b>	<b>Monday, May 6 6-8pm</b>	<b>Saturday, Aug 3 12-3pm</b>	<b>Saturday, Nov 9 11-1pm</b>	<b>Monday, Nov 18 6-8pm</b>
<b>Event Name</b>	Energy Efficiency Stakeholder Process Meeting	Meeting the Energy Efficiency Needs of Limited Income Customers	Energy Efficiency Resource Fair	Rebate Austin!	Rebate Austin!
<b>Location</b>	City Hall	Austin Energy Town Lake Center	Austin Recreation Center	North Village Library	Manchaca Road Library
<b>Host</b>	Austin Energy	Austin Energy	Austin Energy	Austin Public Library	Austin Public Library
<b>Invitees</b>	117 stakeholders	175 stakeholders	179+ stakeholders	Library Patrons, Stakeholders	Library Patrons, Stakeholders
<b>Attendees</b>	35	20	30	60	50
<b>AE staff</b>	23	11	21	4	5

**February 9, 2013 - Energy Efficiency Stakeholder Process Meeting.** The original one-day energy efficiency meeting was held at City Hall. The most common theme focused on program and administration enhancements. Suggestions included expanding the current program base and creating a one stop shop for energy efficiency information and program enrollment. Education, outreach and marketing enhancements were the second most common themes among the stakeholders, with participants noting that increased effort could raise awareness of and participation in energy efficiency programs and behaviors.

### Action Items

As a result of this feedback, AE launched a web-enabled app that provides an interactive tool for residential customers to have daily access to their energy data. It also provides alerts to notify customers when they are approaching the next rate tier. Also, we have been finalizing the look of the new PowerSaver web site which launched in January 2014. Finally, we are investigating a one stop shop approach in partnership with our walk-in Utility Service Centers. These types of programs can increase the awareness of our services and work to engage customers in energy efficiency.

Other suggestions from this meeting included targeting energy efficiency needs of limited income customers. In order to provide stakeholders with more time to delve into this topic, a second meeting was planned to further explore strategies to address the needs of limited income customers.

***May 6, 2013 - Meeting the Energy Efficiency Needs of Limited Income Customers.*** This meeting focused on a topic brought out in the first meeting—programs for limited income customers. This meeting had a similar number of attendees, less than hoped for.

Similar to the first stakeholder meeting, participants in this meeting noted the need for more outreach and education. Some stakeholders were unaware of current programs and felt that the limited income customer group may also be uninformed. Stakeholders expressed the need for strategies to increase community partnerships with local social service groups and churches to best serve limited income customers. This outreach could evoke awareness of energy efficiency programs, provide education on the importance of energy efficiency, and increase understanding of utility bills as part of household expenses.

### Action Items

To address these recommendations, CES staff is working with the Customer Assistance Program (CAP) to increase awareness of energy efficiency through our Free Home Weatherization Program. While it is critical to bring energy efficiency measures to low and limited income customers, the long term benefits come through education and behavior change. The collaboration with CAP brings a component of education to the weatherization process. By educating customers about the benefits of their newly improved home, they can reap long term energy savings.

To increase turnout, stakeholders recommended hosting an event-style meeting rather than a traditional meeting, suggesting that collaboration with other City departments might broaden AE's outreach and increase community participation. To follow on that advice, the third energy efficiency event was a Resource Fair.

***August 3, 2013 - Energy Efficiency Resource Fair.*** Focusing on feedback to reach more stakeholders, the Energy Efficiency Resource Fair, held in partnership with Austin Water Utility and Austin Resource Recovery, was an "open house" type event. AE's Customer Assistance Program and Marketing Communications teams were heavily involved in outreach. Held at the Austin Recreation Center, a central location along easily accessible bus routes, the fair offered information on utility-specific programs. It was publicized to the community as an opportunity to "share ideas and learn about programs that help save money on utility bills." Invitations were emailed widely and media advertising was used to promote the event. Despite these outreach

efforts, attendance for this event was lower than anticipated. Again, quality ideas were received but attendance was limited.

Attendees were surveyed to collect input on energy efficiency ideas and strategies. A review of the survey input shows a correlation between media advertisement and the public's awareness about AE's programs. When asked what they do to reduce electricity use, the majority of people cited a behavioral change as a method to reduce electricity use.

Attendees were also asked how they prefer to receive information (print, digital, social media, radio, etc.) and how familiar are they with AE energy efficiency programs. General feedback indicated a preference for electronic communication and a consistent need for more information about programs.

#### Action Items

Participants noted low cost ideas for energy savings. A few mentioned participating in a former compact fluorescent lighting or CFL program. Lighting is a very easy way to reduce energy costs. We are currently developing a proof of concept to test a new LED program along with a new business strategy. This program will establish a relationship between AE, a retailer and a manufacturer to bring cost and energy savings through the purchase of LEDs. By working with the manufacturer, we can better influence what hits the market.

Again with the low turnout, we sought feedback on possible venues for our final stakeholder meeting. It was recommended that we partner with an existing event that might draw in more than just community stakeholders. With this feedback, we took the opportunity to participate in an Austin Public Library event.

***November 9 and 18, 2013 - Rebate Austin!*** To conclude the year-long process, the CES team continued to look for more collaboration opportunities with the aim of increasing participation and reaching a more diverse audience. AE collaborated with the Austin Public Library in two "Rebate Austin!" events, the first of its kind for City libraries. It was created in response to the expressed needs of citizens who call the library requesting rebate information. The goal of these two events was to provide an opportunity for Austin citizens to learn about available residential rebates and free City services. The event was a success for the library and for City utilities, with participation higher in comparison to the previous events.

Attendees at the two library events were provided rebate information and encouraged to share their ideas about energy efficiency. Results showed the majority of the surveyed participants reduced their electricity use by changing behaviors so they use less energy. Some participants did their own energy efficient improvements while others participated in Austin Energy rebate programs. As with the Resource Fair, participants noted a preference for electronic communication.

Participants recommended rebates and incentives for purchasing energy efficient appliances. Programs for seniors were another suggestion for our residential offerings. Nearly all surveyed individuals wanted to learn more about AE's programs and how to save energy and money.

### Action Items

In support of the idea for appliance incentives, AE is currently working with a consortium of utilities to develop the Strategic Partnership Between Utilities and Retailers. This program will allow AE to offer additional rebates and incentives for energy efficiency refrigerators and other household appliances.

Another program AE will be launching soon is an expanded version of our PowerSaver Volunteer program. This program comes at no cost to customers but provides them with low and no cost ideas for energy and water savings. Customers can choose an email or text option for receiving information. With the widespread use of cell phones, this program can reach nearly all residential customers.

AE will also continue its partnership with the Austin Public Libraries to host future Rebate Austin! events. These will be semi-annual events (spring and fall) at libraries across the city.

### Next Steps

As we conclude this year-long process, AE remains committed to engaging the community in efforts to achieve the 800 MW goal in a cost-effective manner. Increasing communications through our web-enabled app and expanded PowerSaver Volunteer program can enhance customer engagement. We have committed to continue participation in the Austin Public Libraries community outreach events.

CES staff is meeting in regularly scheduled sessions to explore ideas from the stakeholder and community events, develop programs that fit within our current structure and with current resources, and launch programs that meet customer energy needs. Some of these programs will be launched in FY14 with plans for new programs throughout the next few years.

We are augmenting our coordination with Marketing Communications and exploring new methods of communication. We will build on the success of the web-enabled app with more customer engagement in the digital space. We are working with Customer Care to bolster relationships that benefit our customers.

We are looking forward to the new programs launching this fiscal year and toward the programs to come. The engagement with the community provided two key benefits: (1) a better understanding that we are developing the programs that meet customers' energy saving needs; and (2) additional insight into customer behaviors as they impact energy use. By better understanding these concepts, along with the ideas generated by stakeholders and staff, we feel more confident in achieving the 800 MW goal in the most cost-effective manner possible.